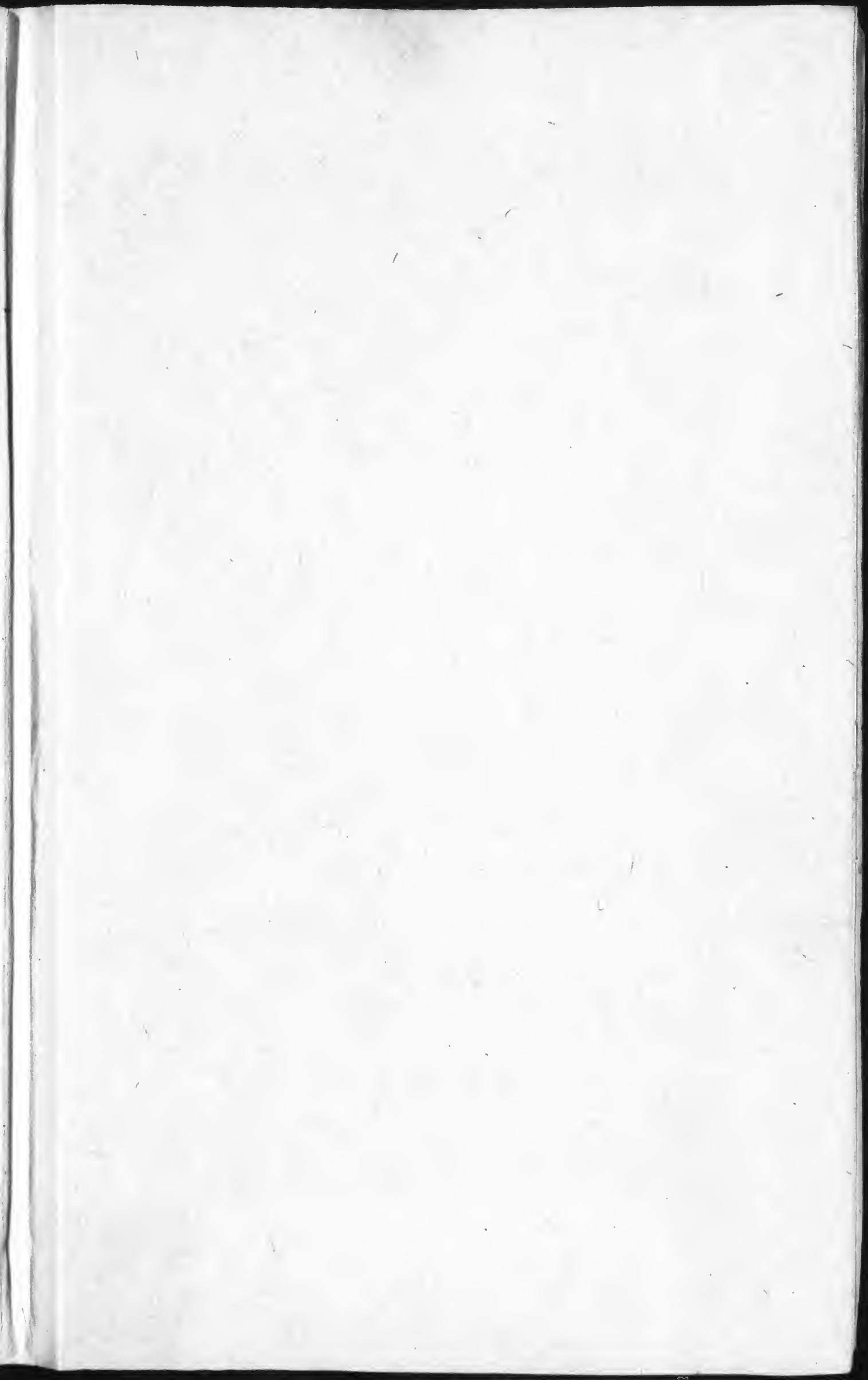
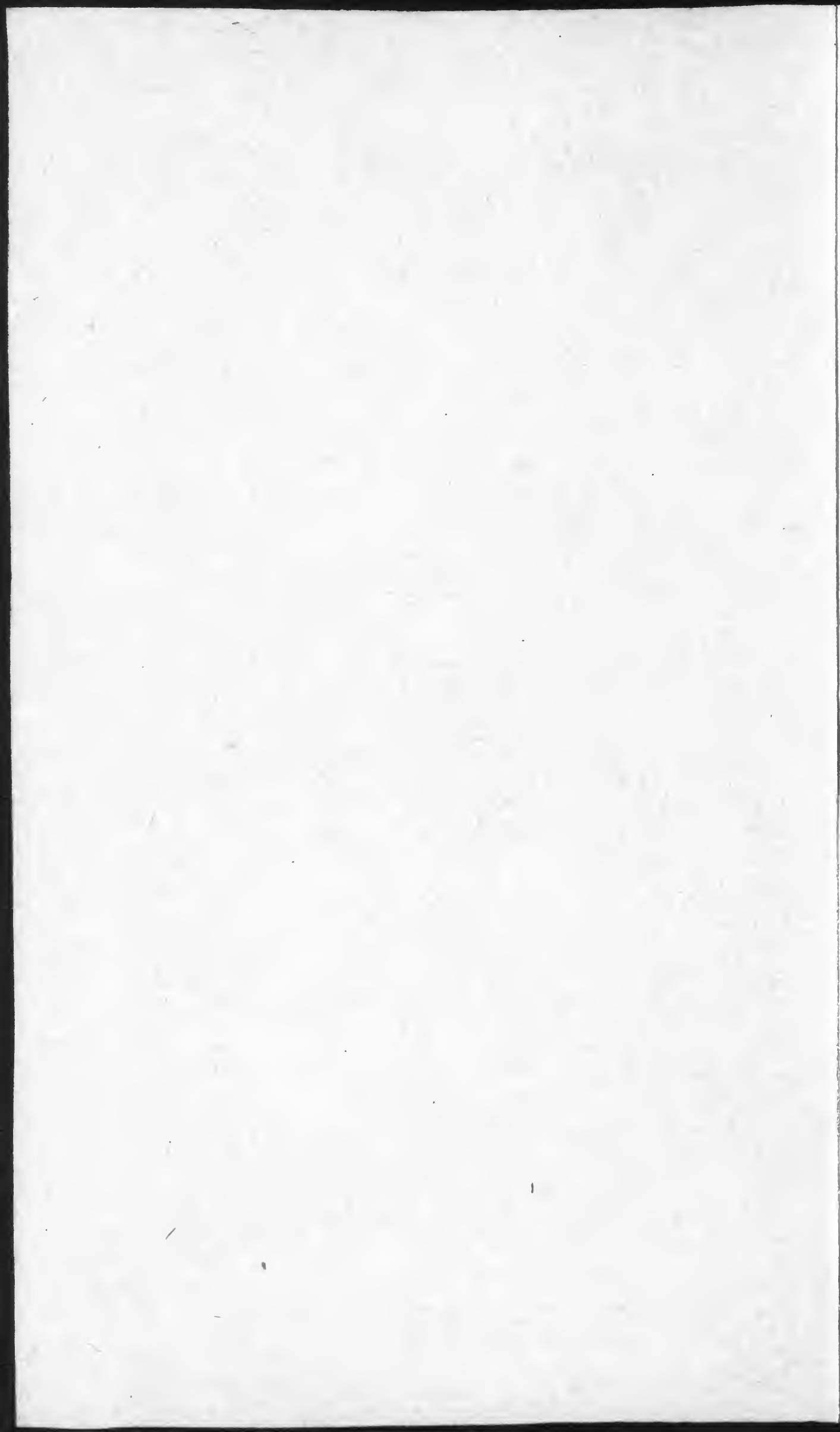


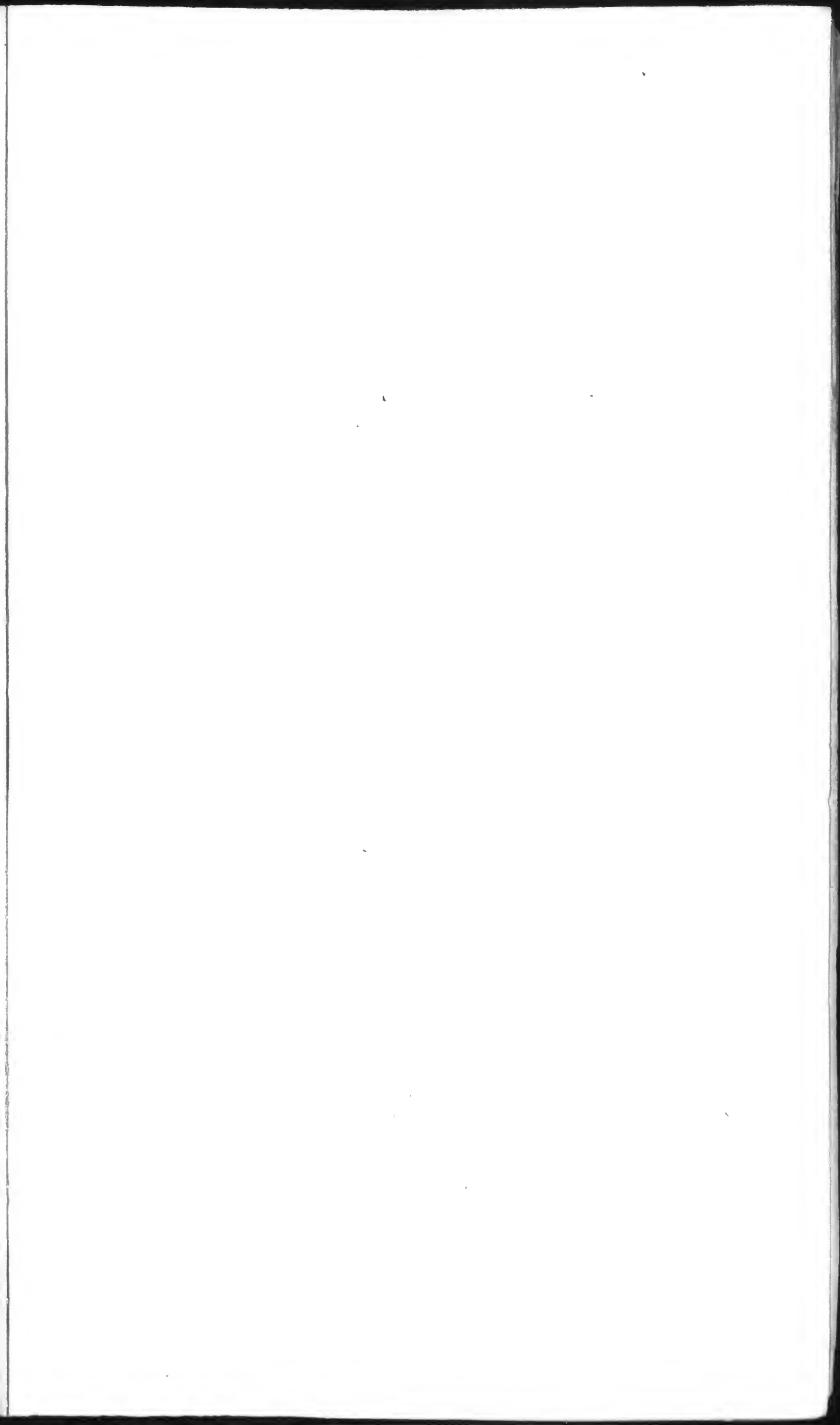
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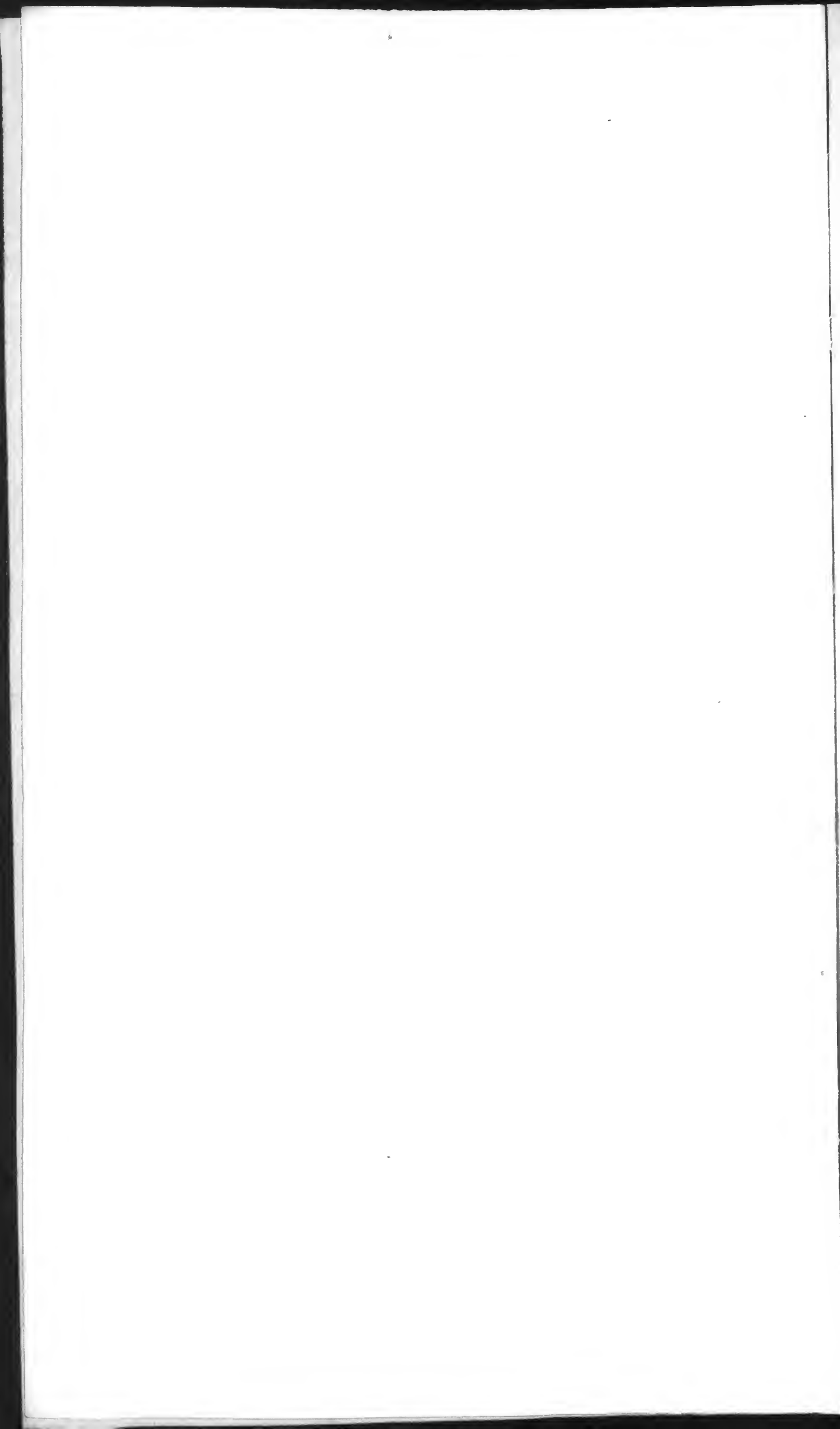
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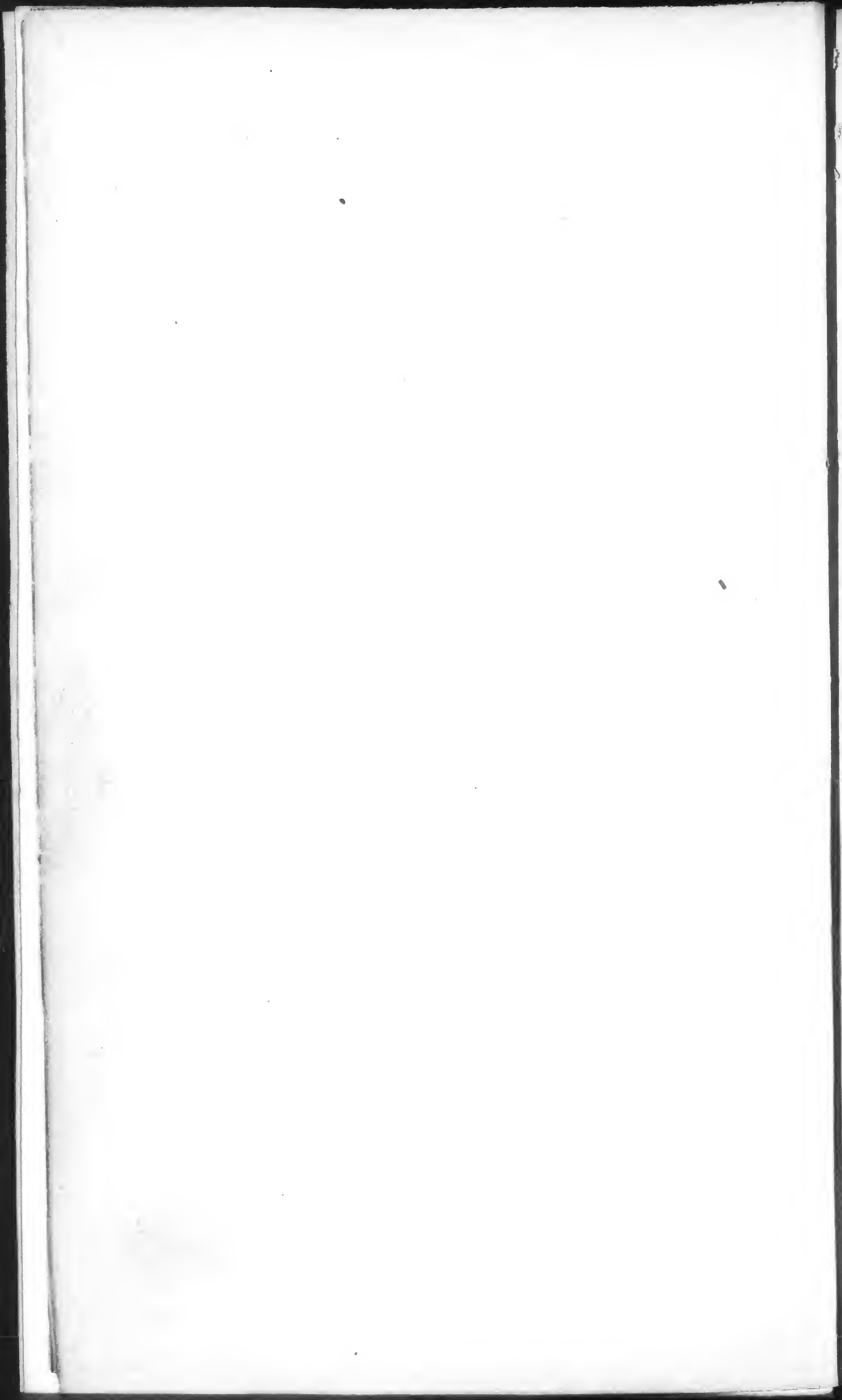
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RECOLLECTIONS

OF THE

Life and Times

181
OF THE LATE

REV. GEORGE LOWE.

BY

ALEXANDER STRACHAN.

"I venerate the man whose heart is warm,
Whose hands are pure, whose *doctrine* and whose *life*,
Coincident, exhibit lucid proof
That he is *honest* in the *sacred cause*."—COWPER.

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THOMAS ALLEN, Esq.,
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Of Congleton;

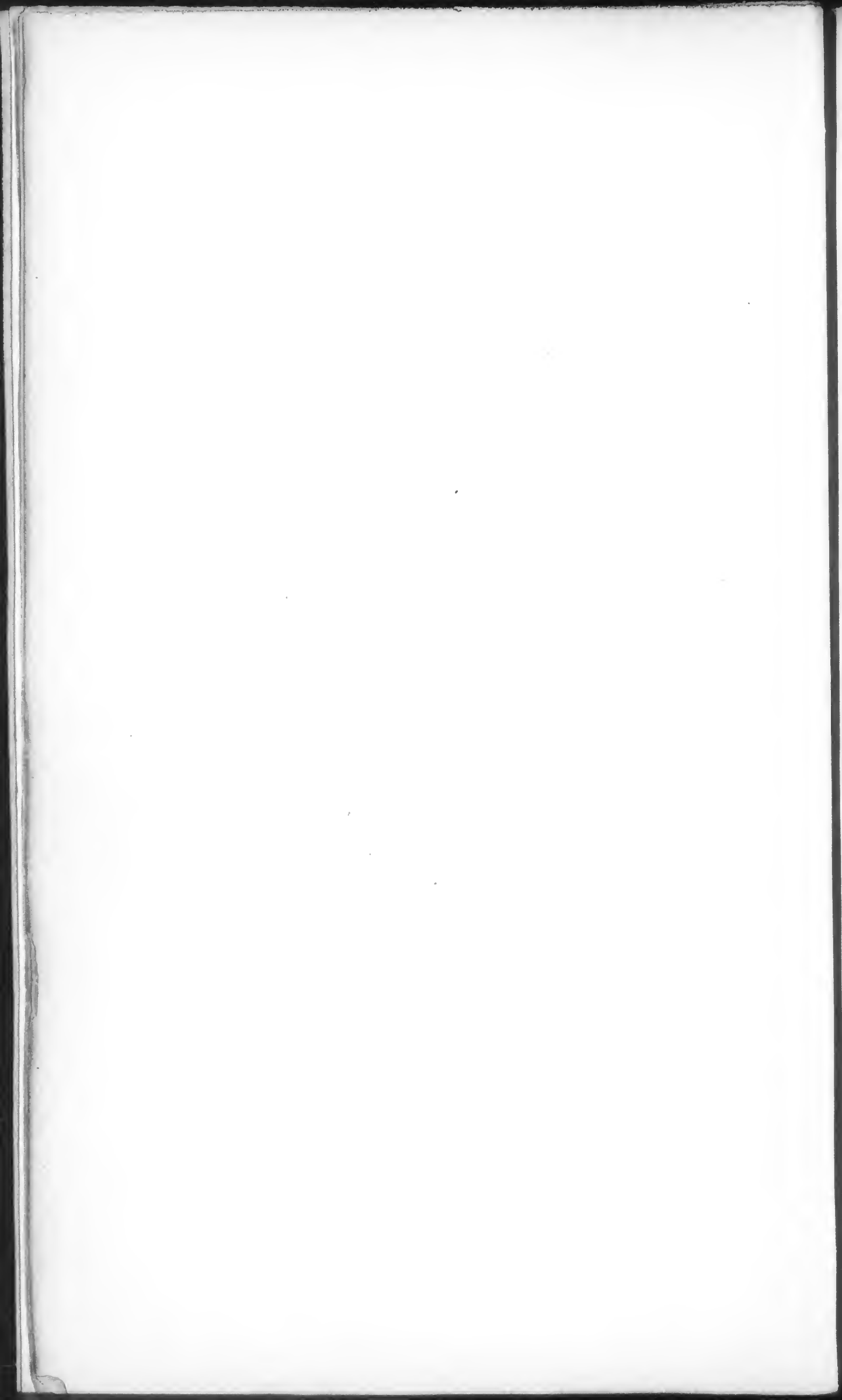
WHO, BY A LONG CONTINUED AND GENEROUS FRIENDSHIP,
PLACED THE SUBJECT OF THIS MEMOIR
UNDER MANY OBLIGATIONS;

THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED,

WITH SENTIMENTS OF PERSONAL RESPECT

AND CHRISTIAN AFFECTION, BY

THE AUTHOR.



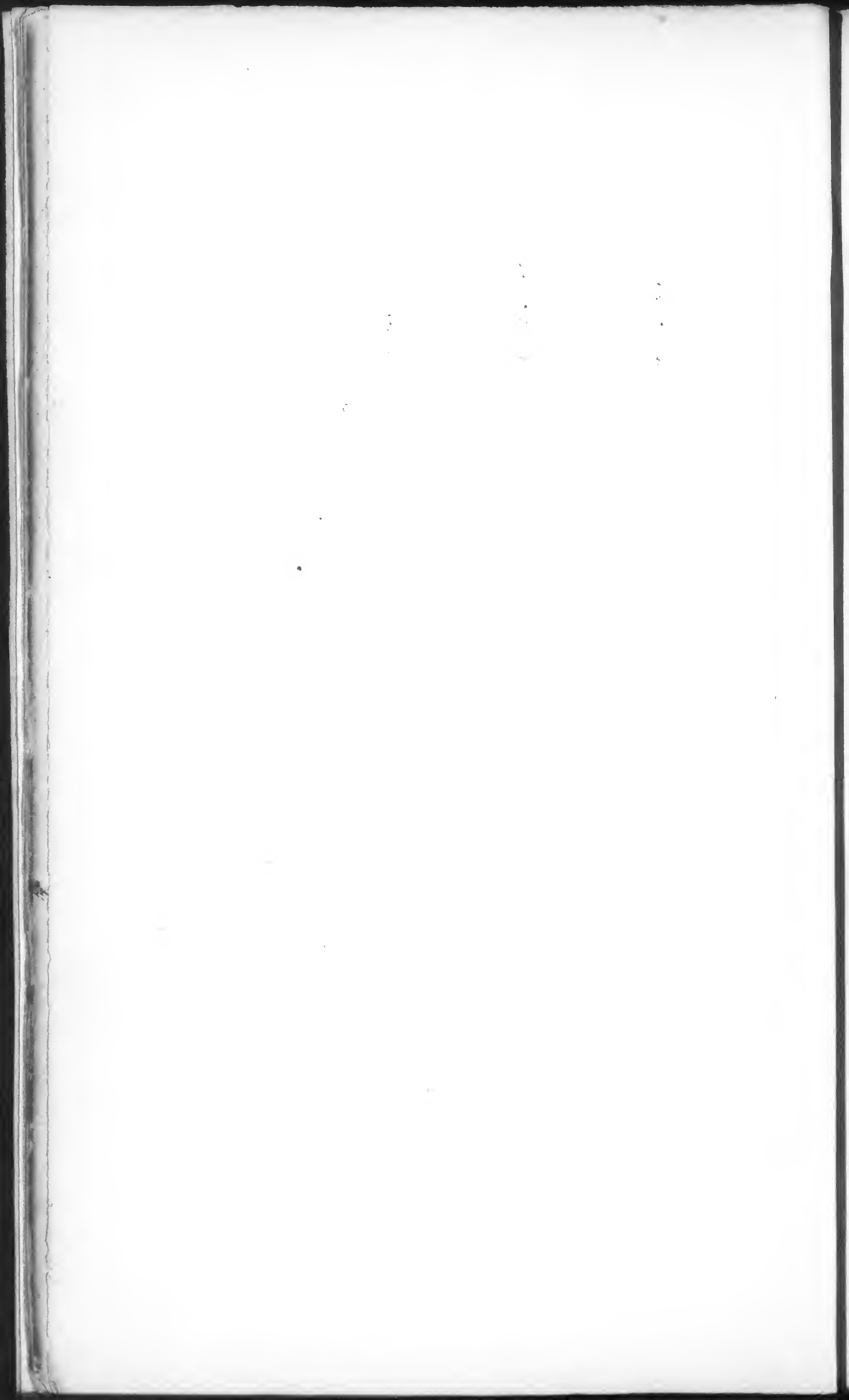
P R E F A C E.

IN the year 1839, the Wesleyan Ministers of the Macclesfield District, held their Annual Meeting in Congleton. During the intervals of business they had frequent opportunities of visiting the late REV. GEORGE LOWE, who then resided in that town. The sight of his Christian brethren revived the recollection of former times, and led him to review the conflicts which he had sustained in the same honourable warfare, the trophies he himself had won from the ranks of scepticism and licentiousness, and the progress of that revival of primitive Christianity, which, for more than half a century, he had laboured to promote, and which was rapidly extending itself to every continent of the earth and island of the sea. To several of the Ministers he gave an

outline of his early life, sketches of the character of some of his coadjutors in the ministry, enumerated many striking incidents that came under his own observation, and compared, as he advanced, Methodism in its infancy with Methodism in its comparative maturity. On these topics he spoke with such feeling and pathos; with such minuteness of detail, and accuracy as to facts and dates; as showed that they formed the substance of his private meditations, and that his mind often dwelt upon them with approving satisfaction. He was on the verge of ninety years, yet his faculties were unimpaired, and the venerable man combined the freshness and vivacity of youth, with the simplicity and fervour of perfect love. On inquiry it was ascertained, that although he had passed through one of the most remarkable periods in the civil and religious history of Great Britain,—being born in the reign of George the Second, and surviving till the second year of her present Majesty,—he had

not recorded a single event of his own life, and that no argument could remove his repugnance to the task. The senior members of the meeting, judging that some memorial should be preserved of so devoted and useful a minister, requested the writer of these pages to remain a few days longer in Congleton, for the purpose of eliciting from Mr. Lowe, and those who had long known him, an account of the more memorable circumstances of his life and times. This he consented to do ; and the facts embodied in the following narrative, were read over in Mr. Lowe's hearing, and received his authentication, in the presence of several of his dearest earthly friends. These "RECOLLECTIONS" are respectfully commended to the candid perusal of the reader. The Title is sufficiently indicative of the miscellaneous nature of the work.

ALEX. STRACHAN.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE.
Introductory remarks—Mr. Lowe's birth—civil and religious state of the country—extraordinary agencies necessary to correct this state—Mr. Wesley supplied this agency—Notices of John Bennett, Howell Harris, and Grace Murray—Effects of Mr. Whitfield's ministry upon Mrs. Lowe and others—Is called George after Mr. Whitfield—Education of children—Infidelity and Socialism—Impressions made upon infancy by dreams and visions—Mr. Lowe's recollections of these scenes.....	1

CHAPTER II.

Introduction of Methodism into G. Lowe's native village, by Nicholas Haughton—His brother John, the Rev. Charles Wesley, and others, tried at the Cork Assizes, "as persons of ill fame"—Lowe impressed by the ministry of Messrs. Costerdine, Bardsley, and Grimshaw—Mr. Grimshaw cited to appear before his bishop—The Bishop and Clergy present moved to tears—The result of the interview—The conversion and labours of Mr. Matthew Mayer of Portwood-Hall—The first establishment of weekly prayer-meetings—Their effect upon the family of James Wood, in whose house they were held—The conversion of John Whitehead, a poor weaver, afterwards Dr. John Whitehead, one of the Biographers of Wesley—Conversion of D. B., Esq., of Manchester—He per-

suades Lowe to join the class—Lowe's deep distress—He obtains pardon and is filled with joy—His review of the circumstances—Relates a remarkable incident—Attends a love-feast in Manchester, conducted by Mr. Wesley—Mr. Wesley leaves Manchester next day to celebrate the birth-day of the Countess of Huntingdon and the first anniversary of her Schools—Boardman and Pilmoor sail for America to establish Methodism on that continent 29

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Lowe removes into Cheshire—falls away—marries—settles in business—is restored—Remarkable conversion of John Barber—Death of Mr. Lowe's mother—He becomes a class-leader—begins to preach—An earthquake occurs just before he commenced his first sermon—its effects upon the congregation—Attends a love-feast in Macclesfield, conducted by Mr. Wesley—Mr. Wesley relates a touching anecdote of an Indian—Revival of religion in Cheshire—Proposals for publishing the Arminian Magazine—Character of that work—Mr. Lowe extends his labours—His success at Hayfield, Fernelee, and Macclesfield Forest—is seized with an alarming illness—Affliction of his family—Death of his wife and two children—is urged to give up business and become an Itinerant 52

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Lowe's distress of mind respecting his call to the Ministry—The distinction between a call to preach and a call to the pastoral office—The call of Matthias, successor to Judas—The Apostles did not ordain men of their own order—their successors men of an inferior order—The Church must respond to the call of God—The perplexity occasioned by uncertainty as to the validity of the

CONTENTS.

xiii

PAGE.

<p>call—Remarkable expedient employed by a Scotch clergyman to determine the reality of his call to the sacred office—Mr. Lowe examined, approved, and appointed to Chester circuit—His first sabbath, his fears, his success—His early rising—His ministerial and pastoral habits—His charity—The duty of the Church to provide for its own poor—The conversion of the late Mrs. Ann Warren, wife of Dr. Samuel Warren—Mr. Lowe's removal to Blackburn—is brought into collision with Popery—Surprising instance of the power of truth in the conversion of a Papist—Protestants admonished to watch the aggressions of Popery—Discussions in Parliament about the Test and Corporation Acts—The Slave trade</p>	78
---	----

CHAPTER V.

<p>Mr. Lowe is appointed to Thirsk—Affecting scene in a public house—Removes to Barnard Castle—His Colleague addresses a letter to the King—The effects of the French Revolution upon the country—Character and proceedings of the revolutionists—Burke's address to the House of Commons respecting these proceedings—Anecdote of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Michael Fenwick—The death of the latter by lightning—The schoolmaster of Scargill, and his daughter, converted under peculiar circumstances—The Preachers of Mr. Lowe's day not politicians—nor controversialists—Character of their ministry—Mr. Lowe appointed to Chester—his fidelity as a pastor—Death of the Rev. John Wesley—Mr. Charles Wesley suspended from being organist to George IV.—reason of that suspension—Conduct of the King and Lord C. on that occasion—Expectations of the enemies of Methodism, on the death of its founder—Fears of its friends—Public opinion divided as to his motives and objects—His character by a modern writer of another community—Testimony of Dr. Clarke to his intellectual and ministerial greatness—The disturbed state of the nation—The steady progress of Methodism.....</p>	113
--	-----

CHAPTER VI.

The Wesleyan Ministry—Advantages and disadvantages of a resident or an itinerant ministry—The severe duties of the itinerancy—The true source of ministerial influence—Mr. Lowe appointed to Macclesfield circuit—Sketch of the character of the Rev. David Simpson, M.A., of Christ's church—Methodism and the Church in alliance—their separation—Anecdotes of Mr. Lowe, T. Allen, Esq., and Edward Clayton—Persecution of the Methodists at Shrigly—Twenty houses, tenanted by the Methodists, pulled down by Edward Downes, Esq.—Remarkable effusion of divine influence upon the neighbourhood—Observations on the state of religious parties—the progress of Christianity retarded by the democracy and infidelity of the times—Conversion and death of Mr. Lowe's brother Robert—Death of Mr. Henry Normanwood—His Epitaph—Religious state of the Macclesfield circuit—Last service conducted by Mr. Lowe at Mobberly—A death-bed scene 150

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Lowe is appointed to Northwich—Revival at Knutsford and erection of the chapel—The peace of the circuit disturbed by the Calvinists—Doctor Clarke's opinion of modern Calvinism—The union of Christian churches—The Methodist Connexion greatly agitated on the subjects of Baptism and the Lord's Supper—The constitution of Methodism modified by the Conference—The effects of the French Revolution, and the writings of Mr. Thomas Paine, upon the political state of this country—Mr. Lowe removes to Nottingham—The state and prospects of religion in that town and neighbourhood—The societies divided by Mr. Alexander Kilham—His character—He demands organic changes, and is expelled by the Conference—The New Connexion formed and placed under the administration of lay trustees—Revival of re-

CONTENTS.

XV

PAGE.

ligion in Nottingham—Remarkable occurrence at Ilkestone—Mr. Lowe visits Sheffield—Preaches for Mr. Bradburn—Mr. Kilham and his Conference attend the service—The effects produced—The old societies in Nottingham rapidly increase in numbers and unity—The political state of Great Britain—Invasion of Ireland by France—Dreadful loss of life and property in that country .. 191

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Lowe is appointed to Howden—Observations on the character and ministry of the Rev. C. Hopper—Singular incident in the life of Rev J. H.—Illness of Mr. Lowe, and his removal to Ripon—State of the country, and attempt upon the King's life—Effects of Mr. Lowe's ministry in a village near Ripon—Strictures on Finney's Work on Revivals—The best mode of conducting revival meetings—Remarkable answer to prayer—The benefits of sanctified affliction—Mr. Lowe appointed a third time to the Chester circuit—The work of God retarded by the heterodoxy of the Rev. Joseph Cooke, one of Mr. Lowe's colleagues—Mr. Cooke's views of Justification by Faith and the Witness of the Spirit—His doctrinal errors exposed and refuted by the Rev. Edward Hare—A summary of Mr. Hare's arguments..... 233

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Lowe is appointed to Wrexham—The erection of a new chapel and enlargement of the work of God in that circuit—He removes to Shrewsbury—His labours interrupted by affliction—Becomes a supernumerary at Congleton—His Christian deportment—The duty of the Church to provide for the aged Pastor—A touching scene in Mr. Lowe's family—The board and education of three orphan children involve him in pecuniary difficulties—Remarkable

interposition of Providence in his behalf—Anecdotes of Howell Harris, Esq., and Doctor Clarke—The effect of early rising in forming character—Mr. Lowe's last illness—Death and funeral—Wesley and Whitfield viewed in their public character—The hostility of the world to primitive Christianity and modern Methodism, contrasted	279
---	-----

RECOLLECTIONS
OF THE
Life and Times
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CHAPTER I.

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RELIGIOUS BIOGRAPHY has been a rich and productive source of edification and encouragement, to the church and people of God, in all ages. In the scriptures, we have a beautiful developement of the spirit and theory of true religion,—of its “breadth

and depth, and length and height ;” with ample specifications and directions as to how it may be commenced, carried on, and completed :—but, in *Christian Biography*, we see the whole embodied in living example. There were few, amongst the thousands who saw the foundation of the temple laid, that understood the scheme of the Architect, or could conceive the magnificence of the structure itself,—its wonderful adaptation to the purposes of its erection, or its exquisite proportions ; but when the “head stone was brought forth with shoutings,” the scaffolding cleared away, and the edifice, in its completeness, exposed to the eye, it was not difficult to form an opinion as to the unrivalled excellence of the plan, or the inimitable taste and genius displayed in its workmanship. It is exactly so in Christianity : many who could not be induced to go into the question of its authenticity, or examine its consecutive arrangement of doctrinal truth, have had their attention arrested by its affecting narratives, parables, and biographical sketches.

The recondite reasonings of Paul have often been passed over ; while the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, the pharisee and publican, have melted the heart, and reclaimed the apostate to virtue and godliness. The numerous examples of submission to the divine will recorded in the word of God, and

the prominence given to the most eminent grace or virtue in each example, are peculiarly characteristic of the sovereignty of that Spirit who "divideth to every man severally," according to his own "will." Hence, the faith of Abraham, the fortitude of the three Hebrews, the patience of Job, and the zeal of Paul, are justly celebrated in scripture: while all these qualities seem to have combined in John, and been perfected in love. This is something like the character I am about to introduce to the reader. A character, the chief excellence of which appears to have consisted in the harmony of its parts. Our duty does not require us to contemplate a minister adorned with the adventitious attractions of learning and rhetoric, nor to describe one gifted with the higher endowments of nature; but simply to portray the intrinsic greatness, and beneficial effects, of a sanctified mediocrity of talent.

GEORGE LOWE was born at Leivenshulme, a village situated about midway between Manchester and Stockport, on the first day of October, old style, in the year 1750. This was just eleven years from the formation of the first Methodist society; but so laboriously and successfully had Mr. Wesley and his little band of spiritual husbandmen, cultivated the moral wilderness, that several portions of it were

beginning to bud and “blossom as the rose.” The public avowal of their principles and objects had excited, in various parts of the country, an extraordinary degree of hostility, and exposed them to persecution from both churchmen and dissenters. Their characters and motives, their ministerial qualifications, the doctrines they propagated, and the effects of their ministry, had been subjected to the severest criticism and “tried as by fire.” But though “the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat” upon the structure they had raised, “it fell not; for it was founded upon a rock.” Being actuated by pure and disinterested motives, they felt that they had nothing to conceal, and had done nothing of which they had reason to be ashamed. “The law of truth was in their mouth, and iniquity was not found in their lips: they walked with God in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.”

Much has been plausibly and eloquently said and written, with a view to depreciate these truly apostolic men in the judgment of their country, and call in question the practical utility of their labours: but the page of history affords ample evidence of the necessity for these labours; while a thousand voices—issuing from the churches of Christ at home and abroad, from every continent on earth,

and from "beneath the altar in heaven,"--proclaim, "these men were the servants of the Most High God, which showed unto us the way of salvation." "By their fruits ye may know them." The religion and morals of all classes of society have been greatly improved, the national character elevated, the civil and religious institutions of the country purified and strengthened; and, what is best of all, multitudes of immortal souls reconciled to God, and eternally saved by their instrumentality.

At the period referred to, a vast tide of ungodliness had set in upon the nation, with such force, and was extending its waves with such rapidity, as to threaten suddenly to sweep from their foundations the superficial breakwaters which the church and dissent had constructed to check their progress. "The management of a mighty kingdom was consigned into the hands of a motley administration: ministers without knowledge, and men without integrity, whose counsels were timid, weak, and wavering; whose folly and extravagance exposed the nation to ridicule and contempt; by whose ignorance and presumption it was reduced to the verge of ruin. Every part of the kingdom resounded with the voice of dissatisfaction, which did not even respect the throne."* "An irresistible tide

* Hume and Smollett, Vol. xvi. p. 271.

of luxury and excess, flowed through all degrees of the people, breaking down all the mounds of civil polity, and opening a way for licence and immorality. The highways were infested with rapine and assassination ; the cities teemed with the brutal votaries of lewdness, intemperance, and profligacy. The whole land was overspread with a succession of tumult, riot, and insurrection, excited in different parts of the kingdom, by a variety of causes.”*

“ Never has a century risen on Christian England so void of soul and faith as that which opened with Queen Anne, and which reached its misty noon beneath the second George ;—a dewless night succeeded by a sunless dawn. There was no freshness in the past, and no promise in the future. The memory of Baxter and Usher possessed no spell ; and calls to revival or reform fell dead on the ear. Confessions of sin, and national covenants, and all projects towards a public and visible acknowledgement of the Most High were voted obsolete, and the golden dreams of Westminster worthies only lived in Hudibras. The Puritans were buried, and the Methodists were not born. The philosopher of the age was Bolingbroke, the moralist was Addison, the minstrel was Pope, and the preacher was Atterbury. The reign of buffoonery was past, but the reign of

* Hume and Smollett, Vol. xiv. p. 38.

faith and earnestness had not commenced. It was taken for granted that Christianity was not so much as a subject for enquiry, but was at length discovered to be fictitious. And men treated it as if this were an agreed point among all people of discernment.”*

“Such was the state of things, when Wesley and Whitfield made their appearance, who will be hailed by posterity as the second reformers of England. Nothing was further from the views of these excellent men than to innovate on the established religion of their country; their sole aim was to recall the people to the good old way, and to imprint the doctrine of the Articles and Homilies on the spirits of men. But the revival of the *old* appeared like the introduction of a *new* religion; and the hostility it excited was less sanguinary, but scarcely less virulent, than that which signalized the first publication of Christianity.”† “It was a time,” says Southey, “of great degeneracy in many important points. The church was ill supplied with ministers: its higher preferments were bestowed with more reference to political connexions than to individual desert: and there never was *less religious feeling*, either within the establishment or without, than when Wesley blew his trumpet, and awakened those who slept. My belief is, that Wesley and Whit-

* Bishop Butler.

† Hall.

field were chosen instruments of Providence, for giving a great impulse to religious feeling when it *was most needed.*"

This deep-rooted depravity of principle, and almost universal profligacy of manners, could not be corrected by ordinary means. Indeed, there was no agency then in existence capable of counteracting, and far less of eradicating, the prevalent, debasing, and daring vices of the age. Hence, divine Providence called into its service, an extraordinary class of agents. In their selection, the Head of the Church seemed to exercise the same sovereign authority that conferred the dignity of apostleship upon the fishermen of Galilee, and sent them forth to subvert the idolatries of the Gentiles, and propagate amongst mankind the doctrine of reconciliation. In both cases, the reason for overlooking the dignitaries of the Hebrew and Anglican churches, was undoubtedly the same; and to the latter, as well as to the former, the apostle's appeal strictly applies: "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things which are mighty: and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen; yea, and things which are not, to bring to

nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence."

In this arrangement of Providence, Mr. Wesley reluctantly acquiesced. He was, however, assailed with great bitterness of spirit, by many of his clerical contemporaries, for having disturbed the order established in the Church of England, by admitting the co-operation of lay-helpers in the ministry. It is an interesting fact, that, while his mind was in the balance, and rather inclined to prohibit, than encourage, an unordained ministry, the Lord was, unknown to him, awakening several of the eastern provinces by the energetic addresses of John Bennett; and rousing the population of the west, by the pointed and forcible appeals of Howell Harris, Esq., both educated and respectable lay-members of the Church.

Howell Harris was born at Trevecka, on the twenty-third of January, 1714. He received a good education, and was intended for holy orders. On the 30th of March, 1735, he was convinced of sin, at his parish church, and obtained peace with God on the 25th of May following. Instantly he felt an insatiable desire for the salvation of sinners. He sold his gay and fashionable clothes, and gave the money to the poor. "At that time," says his biographer, "a universal deluge of swearing, lying,

revelling, drunkenness, fighting, and gambling, had overspread the country." The apathy of the clergy distressed him exceedingly. He set up family worship in his mother's house, to which he invited his neighbours, who soon filled it to overflowing. This practice he continued until he went to Oxford, in November, 1735. The immoralities which he witnessed at college soon disgusted him, and he withdrew from so contaminated an atmosphere. On returning to Trevecka, he commenced a school. He visited and exhorted in every house in the parish, and many were awakened and converted. The clergymen in the neighbourhood were alarmed, and called in the aid of several dukes, lords, and magistrates, to protect the church, and arrest the progress of this infatuated layman. This persecution raged so fiercely, that he was turned out of his school. This enlarged his sphere of action ; and he itinerated, single and alone, through ten English counties, and through the whole principality of Wales, addressing large assemblies of people, and forming religious societies. He was often pelted with stones, eggs, and mud ; and his clothes were often torn to pieces. During these labours and sufferings he was happy in his soul,—being full of faith and courage. He first saw Mr. Wesley in Bristol, in June, 1739. After seventeen years of unremitting and exhausting

efforts to save souls, he settled at Trevecka, where he died happy in God, July the 21st, 1773, and in the sixtieth year of his age.

Mr. John Bennett was a gentleman of good family in Derbyshire ; and, being intended for one of the learned professions, had received a classical education. Being of a serious disposition, and fond of books, he made choice of divinity ; and, about the age of seventeen, was placed under the care of Dr. Lathem, of Findren, near Derby, with a view to have gone through a course of academical studies. Here, however, he remained but a little while ; and, having relinquished all thoughts of the ministry, engaged himself as a justice's clerk to R. Bagshaw, Esq., in which situation he continued till he was twenty-two years of age. In the year 1739, when he was about twenty-five years old, being in Sheffield, he was invited to go and hear David Taylor, an itinerant preacher out of Leicestershire, whose ministry God was pleased to bless for the good of his soul, though he went more with a view to ridicule the preacher, than to receive any benefit from his word. Struck with his earnestness and zeal, he invited Mr. Taylor into that part of Derbyshire called the High Peak, and travelled with him from place to place, though he thereby incurred the displeasure of his friends. Thus he was the first

instrument of bringing what were afterwards called the Methodists, into this and the adjoining counties; and, when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, and to visit him with a sense of his pardoning love, he relinquished all secular pursuits, and devoted himself indefatigably to the work of exhorting and beseeching sinners to be reconciled to God. He possessed considerable talents, and freely employed them for God. His extraordinary labours were attended with a remarkable blessing, and he was instrumental in raising several societies, chiefly in Lancashire, Derbyshire, and Yorkshire, before either Wesley or Whitfield visited these parts of the kingdom. He was introduced to Mr. Wesley by Lady Huntingdon, and became one of his itinerant preachers. Having embraced religious opinions at variance with the Wesleyan Theology, he separated from Mr. Wesley on the 3rd of April, 1752. He organised an Independent Church at Warbutton, in Cheshire, where he laboured with zeal and success, "turning many to righteousness," till the year 1759, when he died. His death was peaceful and glorious. He said to his wife, "I am dying. I am not afraid; for I am assured, past a doubt, or even a scruple, that I shall be with the Lord, to behold his glory. 'The blood of Jesus Christ hath cleansed me from all sin.' I long to be dissolved. Come, Lord Jesus, loose me

from the prison of this clay! Oh sweet, sweet dying! I could die ten thousand times. Too sweet, my dear, too sweet! I can now stake my soul on the doctrines I have preached; yes, ten thousand souls. It is the everlasting truth. Stick by it."

His wife, formerly Grace Murray, with whom Mr. Lowe was intimately acquainted, occupies a place, no less distinguished than that of her husband, in the annals of Methodism. She possessed superior personal accomplishments, united to a mind cultivated by education, and an imagination brilliant and lively in the highest degree. She was employed by Mr. Wesley to organise his female classes; and, for this purpose, travelled through various parts of both England and Ireland. Mr. Wesley used to call her his right hand: and "it is well known," says the author of her life, "that he wished to make her his wife." An acquaintance, however, was formed between her and Mr. Bennett; which, in its origin and continuance, was marked by several unusual circumstances; and which eventually led to their marriage. Mr. Wesley deplored this event in a lengthened poem which he prepared on the occasion. The following verses will show the exquisite disappointment he experienced—the depth of feeling—the tenderness and pathos that pervade the whole

piece. The scene is laid in his sick chamber, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

“’Twas now I bowed my aching head,
While sickness shook the house of clay ;
Duteous she ran with humble speed
Love’s tend’rest offices to pay.
To ease my pain, to soothe my care,
T’ uphold my feeble hands in prayer.

Oft, (though as yet the nuptial tie
Was not,) clasping her hand in mine,
‘What force,’ she said, ‘beneath the sky,
Can now our well-knit souls disjoin ?
With thee I’d go to India’s coast,
To worlds in distant oceans lost !’

Such was the friend, than life more dear,
Whom in one luckless baleful hour,
(For ever mentioned with a tear !)
The tempter’s unresisted power
(Oh ! the unutterable smart !)
Tore from my inly-bleeding heart.”

For several years Mrs. Bennett continued to travel with her husband, but when her family and its cares increased, she retired to Chapel-in-le-Frith ; where, for more than half a century, her life and conversation, uniformly, did the greatest honour to her religious principles and profession. She met a class in her own house for many years, and died in peace,

February the 23rd, 1803, in the eighty-ninth year of her age. Her death was improved by the Rev. Jabez Bunting, A. M., and a memoir of her life afterwards published by her son, who became a dissenting minister.

By the preaching of John Bennett, in the midland and eastern districts of the country, and of Howell Harris, in the southern and western, the parents of several of the first race of Methodist preachers were converted to God, and thus qualified to prepare their sons, by domestic instruction and discipline, for those situations of responsibility and usefulness, they were destined to fill in the societies subsequently formed by Mr. Wesley. This was the case with regard to the parents of Mr. Lowe. They occupied a small farm in the township of Leivenshulme, and endeavoured to train up their numerous and interesting family, in habits of industry and morality. They attended the Church of England; although Mrs. Lowe, who had been brought up a presbyterian, continued to give a decided preference to that form of religious worship. In the year 1750, she was persuaded to go to Stockport to hear Mr. John Bennett. He preached in a small room, being unable to procure one of a larger size. The place was very much crowded; and all present felt that he had brought them the gospel, "not in word

only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."

Mrs. Lowe was so much affected by the service, that, from this time, she availed herself of every opportunity of hearing the itinerating preachers; notwithstanding the fierce persecution which then raged against all who deviated in faith or practice from the ignorant and brutish multitude. Soon after this she had the privilege, with many thousands more, of hearing the Rev. George Whitfield, in Ancots-field, Manchester. The subject of his discourse was Jeremiah xviii. 1—5. "The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." While this Christian orator compared human nature to a "vessel marred on the wheels," and described the evangelical process by which the potter "made it again another vessel," an extraordinary sensation was produced amongst the people. The stillness of death rested upon the dense multitude of men, women, and children, who stood blended together before him, till towards the

close of the service, when there was a simultaneous burst of feeling. Unable any longer to resist the weight and pointedness of his application, several hundreds cried out, as on the day of Pentecost, "men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Mrs. Lowe never before attended such a service as this; never listened to a discourse that displayed such rhetorical ability, or produced such extensive and visible effects; and never felt, in the same degree, the "powers of the world to come." She expected to be confined in a short time, and resolved that the child, if a boy, should be called George,—after this distinguished minister.

George was the fourth of twelve children, and outlived them all by many years. He was a child of a lively disposition, and of great tenacity of memory. An incident occurred, when he was only eighteen months old, of which he retained the most distinct recollection up to the time of his decease. One of his little brothers was seized with a severe illness, of which he died. After he was laid out, George was taken into the room to see him. He was very much struck with the appearance of the corpse, particularly that the eyes should be closed, and a halfpenny placed upon each eye. He went up at once to the body, removed the halfpence, and tryed to open his brother's eyes. For this

natural and masculine act, his mother corrected him with some severity. Here, however, was presented to him a new class of circumstances, which not only induced reflection and enquiry, but also brought out and more fully developed his infant faculties. From this time he began to feel the grace of God influencing his heart, and awakening uneasy emotions, when he did anything wrong.

It is almost incredible, at how early a period the Divine Spirit operates upon the mind of infancy: conveying to it impressive views of God—giving it power to discriminate between truth and falsehood—exciting thoughts of death—and inclining it to imitate “whatsoever things are lovely and of good report,” in the example of those around. As the Holy Spirit ordinarily works by means, it is probable that all these effects are in proportion to the labour bestowed on the instruction of childhood. An author of the last century has observed, “that as sickness and disease have created the necessity of medicines and physicians, so the disorders of our rational nature have introduced the necessity of education and tutors. And, as the only end of the physician is to restore our physical nature to a state of soundness, so the only end of education is to restore our rational nature to its proper condition. As physic may justly be called the art of restoring

health, so education should be considered in no other light than as the art of recovering to man his moral integrity. This was the end pursued by the youths that attended upon Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato. Their every day lessons and instructions were so many lectures upon the nature of man, his true end, and the right use of his faculties : upon the immortality of the soul, and its relation to God : the agreeableness of virtue to the divine nature : upon the necessity of temperance, justice, mercy, and truth, and the folly of indulging our passions.

Now, as Christianity has, as it were, newly created the moral and religious world, and set every thing that is reasonable, wise, holy, and desirable, in its true point of light, so one would expect that the education of children should be as much mended by Christianity as the doctrines of religion are. As it has introduced a new state of things, and so fully informed us of the nature of man and the end of his existence ; as it has fixed all his duties, taught him the means of purifying his soul, of pleasing God, and being happy eternally ; one would naturally suppose, that every Christian country would abound with schools, not only teaching a few questions and answers of a catechism, but for the forming, training, and practising children in such a course of life, as the sublime doctrines of Christianity require. An

education under Pythagoras or Socrates had no other end but to teach children to think, judge, and act as Pythagoras and Socrates were accustomed to do. And is it not reasonable to suppose, that, in all Christian schools; the teaching youth to begin their lives in the spirit Christianity enjoins, should not only be more, but an hundred times more regarded, than any or all things else? For those that educate children should imitate their guardian angels: suggest nothing to their minds but what is wise and holy; help them to discover every false judgment of their minds, and to subdue every wrong passion of their hearts. And it is as reasonable to expect and require all this benefit from a Christian education, as to require that medicine should strengthen all that is right in their nature, and remove all their disorders. But let it be carefully remembered, that God, not man, is physician of souls; He “worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Nevertheless, he honours men to be “workers together with himself.”

The imitative powers of children are remarkable, as has been admitted in all ages; but it was reserved to the atheistical philosophy, and brutalizing socialism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to trace all the evils existing in society to this source. These public preceptors say, that, “in the earlier

stages of existence, the parent may graft upon the *innocent* nature of his child the principles of either virtue or vice—that the human heart is like the sponge, *equally* adapted to absorb the Balm of Gilead, or a solution of arsenic—that youth ought not to be restrained, but allowed to follow, like the inferior animals, the laws and instincts of nature, and to participate in all those pleasures to which they may be prompted by inclination or appetite—that man is a mere creature of circumstances, and *must* assume the complexion of those with whom he mingles in active life—and that, although he be of a more perfect organization than the ass or the monkey, yet his claim to immortality does not rest upon a more certain foundation.”

We would just remind those gentlemen, that, even with their admission, that man “is of a more perfect organization than the ass,” the cases are not quite parallel. To prove that the claim of the brute to immortality is as valid as that of man, it would be necessary to show, that the inferior animals not only possess all those attributes of mind, which have hitherto been supposed to be peculiar to man, but also that they possess them in the *same degree of perfection*. The religious argument for man’s immortality, is based upon the revealed will of God; the philosophical argument is deduced from the ascertained fact, that the higher endowments of the

human mind are not to be found at all in any of the inferior orders of creatures. The shadow of reason in the brute does not necessarily imply its immortality. The immortality of man is revealed ; that of the brute is not. Besides, might not the Creator have endowed the inferior creatures with their present semblance of intellectual qualities, without adding the principle of immortality? Is it, therefore, fair to raise the monkey and the ass to an equality with man?

We are required, by these theorists, to trace the line of demarkation that runs between the human and the brute soul, marking the former as being of higher origin, of a purer nature, and of a more important destiny than the latter ; but it will be time enough to do this when the mathematical ass of the infidel shall have published a second edition of Euclid, with improvements, or calculated tables for the next year's almanack : and the accomplished and literary monkey of the socialist written the history of his own life and times, or produced an analysis of the bread and milk on which he breakfasted last christmas morning.

Although, therefore, we are prepared to admit that man, in every stage of his progress, is greatly influenced by circumstances, yet we deny that he is borne along by irresistable impulses—that he is not

responsible to his Creator, for “the deeds done in the body”—and that he is not furnished with means and motives sufficient to dispose and enable him to direct and govern his conduct agreeably to the precepts of God’s law. As the doctrine of Original Sin is established by evidence which infidelity cannot subvert, we would urge upon parents the necessity of counteracting its influence by the steady exhibition of both precept and example in private life.

Doctor Adam Clarke “received his first impressions concerning the awful realities of eternity when about *six* years of age. At this time his father lived at Maghera, where he kept an English and classical school. With one of the pupils, James Brookes, Adam formed a most intimate friendship. One day they sat down upon a bank, and entered into very serious conversation: they were both greatly affected; and this feeling was deepened to exquisite distress by the following observations made by little Brooks, ‘O Addy, Addy,’ said he, ‘what a dreadful thing is eternity! And, O, how dreadful to be put into hell fire, and to be burnt there for ever and ever!’ Weeping bitterly, they prayed to God to forgive their sins, and making mutual promises of amendment, separated from each other with sad hearts.

“In reference to these circumstances, Adam has been heard to say,—‘I was then truly and deeply convinced that I was a sinner, and that I was liable to eternal punishment; and that nothing but the mercy of God could save me from it: though I was not so conscious of any other sin, as that of disobedience to my parents, which at that time affected me most forcibly. When I left my little companion, I went home, told the whole to my mother with a full heart, expressing the hope that I should never more say any bad words, or refuse to do what she, or my father, might command. She was both surprised and affected, and gave me much encouragement, and prayed heartily for me. With a glad heart she communicated the information to my father, on whom I could see it did not make the same impression; for he had little opinion of pious resolutions in childish minds, though he feared God, and was a conscientious churchman. I must own, that the way in which he treated it was very discouraging to my mind, and served to mingle impressions with my serious feelings, that were not friendly to their performance; yet the impression, though it grew faint, did not wear away. It was laid deep in the consideration of eternity, and my accountability to God for my conduct, and the absolute necessity of enjoying his favour that I might never taste

the bitter pains of eternal death. Had I had any person to point out the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world, I believe I should then have been found as capable of *repentance* and *faith*, (my youth and circumstances considered,) as ever I was afterwards. But I had no helper, 'no messenger, one among a thousand, who could show man *His righteousness.*' "

The following occurrence was mentioned by Mr. Lowe, to show how singularly and variously Divine Providence co-operates to give effect to parental instruction : "In the fifth year of my age," said he, "I was often scared with dreams and visions of another world. These were sometimes inexpressibly sublime, terrific, and affecting. I was frequently convulsed with fear, and awoke with every muscle quivering, and the whole body bathed in perspiration. Eliphaz has given an exquisite description of the effects produced upon his mind, by a similar manifestation of the reality of a future state of existence : 'Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man, fear came upon me and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face : the hair of my flesh stood up : it stood still, but I could not discern the

form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker.' "

"Children," says the author of the *Philosophy of Sleep*, "dream almost from their birth; and if we may judge from what, on many occasions, they endure during sleep, we must suppose that the visions which haunt their young minds, are often of a very frightful kind. Children, from many causes, are more apt to have dreams of terror than adults. Their minds are exceedingly susceptible of dread in all its forms, and prone to be acted on by it, whatever shape it assumes. Many of the dreams experienced at this early period, leave an indelible impression upon the mind. They are remembered in after years with feelings of pain: and, blending with the more delightful reminiscences of childhood, demonstrate that this era, which we are apt to consider one unvaried scene of sunshine and happiness, had, as well as future life, its shadows of melancholy, and was not untinged with hues of sorrow and care. The sleep of infancy, therefore, is far from being that ideal state of felicity which is commonly supposed. It is haunted with its own terrors, even more than that of adults; and, if many of the visions incident to it are equally delightful, there can be little doubt,

that it is also tortured by dreams of a more painful character than often fall to the share of after life."

"Some of the scenes which I witnessed in sleep," said Mr. Lowe, "were of a mixed character ; filling the mind alternately with fear and the most agreeable sensations. One night, just after I had fallen asleep, —and although it is above eighty years since, yet all the circumstances are as vividly pictured before my mind at this moment, as if it had occurred but yesterday,—I suddenly found myself standing upon a plain which extended far beyond the widest range of the eye. A voice, soft and shrill, told me I must traverse that apparently immeasurable plain in the direction of the sun, whose rays were tinging the margin of the clouds and the summits of the distant hills, as he was retiring behind the curtain of night. I was also informed that, by pursuing the indistinct path which opened on my view, I should arrive at a place of unequalled beauty and felicity. I had not proceeded far, before I heard a foot rapidly advancing from behind me. I turned quickly round and saw an old venerable looking man, with an angry countenance and in a menacing attitude, frowning upon me. I was overwhelmed with fear, while he put his clammy hands upon me, and shook his gray and fleecy locks over me. In a moment I observed a person of uncommon sweetness of countenance

approaching from the right. He merely beckoned to the stern individual, at whose hands I expected instant death, and he disappeared. A feeling of admiration and joy was diffused through my soul while I gazed upon my deliverer, who, on retiring, threw aside the drapery with which his person was clothed, and I distinctly saw a scar in his side, and certain marks upon the palms of his hands."

In a similar way did God "bring life and immortality" before the child Samuel; and, indeed, in every age, he "hath, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, ordained strength." These secret "communings of the spirit," made salutary impressions upon the mind of young Lowe, which were preserved and deepened by parental vigilance, and a uniform attendance on the public means of grace.

CHAPTER II.

Introduction of Methodism into G. Lowe's native village, by Nicholas Haughton—His brother John, the Rev. Charles Wesley, and others, tried at the Cork Assizes, "as persons of ill fame"—Lowe impressed by the ministry of Messrs. Costerdine, Bardsly, and Grimshaw—Mr. Grimshaw cited to appear before his bishop—The Bishop and Clergy present moved to tears—The result of the interview—The conversion and labours of Mr. Matthew Mayer of Portwood-Hall—The first establishment of weekly prayer-meetings—Their effect upon the family of James Wood, in whose house they were held—The conversion of John Whitehead, a poor weaver, afterwards Dr. John Whitehead, one of the Biographers of Wesley—Conversion of D. B., Esq., of Manchester—He persuades Lowe to join the class—Lowe's deep distress—He obtains pardon and is filled with joy—His review of the circumstances—Relates a remarkable incident—Attends a love-feast in Manchester, conducted by Mr. Wesley—Mr. Wesley leaves Manchester next day to celebrate the birth-day of the Countess of Huntingdon and the first anniversary of her Schools—Boardman and Philmor sail for America to establish Methodism on that continent.

ONE of the neighbours of Mr. Lowe, senior, Nicholas Haughton, who, for several years, had been a consistent professor of religion, was one of

the first pioneers who opened the way for the introduction of Methodism into the villages adjacent to Lievenshulme. His brother John travelled in Ireland with Mr. Charles Wesley ; and endured, with Christian fortitude, all the persecution to which that good man was exposed in that country. He was associated with Mr. Wesley and others, when they were tried at the Cork Assizes as “ persons of ill-fame, vagabonds, and common disturbers of his Majesty’s peace.” The mob in that city was headed by Nicholas Butler, a *ballad-singer*, and committed great outrages. They entered the Wesleyan place of worship, pulled down the preachers, tore out the windows, demolished the pulpit, burnt the seats, fell upon men, women, and children, with swords and clubs, and committed other acts of violence too shocking to name. Redress was sought for in vain : several depositions were laid before the grand jury, but they did not find one bill against the rioters ; on the contrary, they made that memorable presentment, which will be preserved in their records as a witness against them, of the force of *prejudice* united with *ignorance*, to succeeding generations. “ We find and present Charles Wesley, Thomas Williams, Robert Swindells, Jonathan Reeves, Samuel Larwood, Joseph Cownley, John Haughton, James Wheatley, Charles Skelton, William Tucker,

and Daniel Sullivan, as persons of ill-fame, vagabonds, and common disturbers of his Majesty's peace; and pray that they may be transported." These were all preachers except the last, who was a respectable citizen. His crime was, that he received the preachers into his house. This encouraged the mob; who now scoured the streets day and night, shouting,—“Five pounds for a *swadler's head* ;”—the name by which the Methodists were chiefly distinguished in Ireland. At the Lent Assizes, the judge inquired for the persons presented; and, upon their standing forth, he was visibly agitated; and, for some time, unable to proceed. He at length called for the evidence: on which the ballad-singer appeared; and, after being asked his profession, the judge ordered him to withdraw. No other persons appearing, he turned to the ministers and said, “Gentlemen, there is no evidence against you; you may retire: I am very sorry you have been treated so very improperly. I hope the police of this city will be better attended to for the time to come.” Mr. Wesley observed ironically,—“This memorable presentment is worthy to be preserved in the annals of Ireland, to all succeeding generations.”

Young Lowe was a great favourite with his mother; and, being more religiously disposed than

any of the other children, had the privilege of accompanying her, when an opportunity offered, for hearing a sermon on the week night. In the eighth year of his age, she took him to hear Mr. Robert Costerdine, then a local preacher in Manchester, who had been invited to preach at the house of Nicholas Haughton. The preacher selected Isaiah vi. 1. as the subject of his address: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple." "The prophet," he remarked, "here describes the time when he 'saw the Lord;' the situation in which he 'saw the Lord,'—'high and lifted up;' and the place in which he 'saw the Lord,'—'In the temple.'" After this formal division of the subject, he exclaimed,—“Friends! I could as soon forget the fact of my own existence as the time when, the manner in which, and the place where, I found the Lord.” He then took a final leave of his text, and gave such a detail of the circumstances under which he had been converted, as deeply affected the people and melted George into tears. From this time he became more thoughtful and serious; but still he was dissatisfied with himself and unhappy. His distress was mitigated, in some degree, by a sermon which he heard soon after, by Mr. Samuel Bardsly, a local preacher, from

those animating words, "This man receiveth sinners." Under this sermon he felt, that, although, in his own judgment, he was "the chief of sinners," yet he was not beyond the range of God's forgiving mercy. He remained in this state of mind, alternating between hope and despair, for upwards of two years. In the tenth year of his age he went to Stockport, to hear the Rev. William Grimshaw, in the expectation of obtaining some spiritual encouragement. As he was going up the street, a woman threw open her window and cried after him, "thou young snake, art thou leaving the church and going after these Methodists?" There was, by this time, a small Wesleyan chapel erected in the town, with a gallery; which, on this occasion, was excessively crowded. The service was interesting and protracted; but Lowe did not receive the blessing he had anticipated. Mr. Grimshaw had engaged to preach in Manchester in the evening. There was then but one chapel in Manchester, which was situated in High-Street. Before entering the pulpit, the steward, Mr. Richard, usually called Dicky Barlow, called the reverend gentleman aside, and said—"Sir, we feel exceedingly obliged by your kindness, in coming to preach to us on this occasion, but allow me to observe, that our people here have a great deal of preaching, and a great

dislike to long preaching. When our venerable Father Wesley comes, he generally concludes the service within the hour." Mr. Grimshaw instantly replied, "Mr. Wesley! God bless him! He can do more in one hour, than I can in two;" and under that impression he preached just two hours.

These irregularities subjected Mr. Grimshaw to great obloquy and persecution. In a letter to Mr. Wesley he said, "O dear Sir, I know not what to say; I know not what to do. Sometimes I have made more excursions into neighbouring parishes, to exhort, but always with a Nicodemical fear, and to the great offence of the clergy, which, till lately, almost made me resolve to sally out no more, but content myself in my own bounds: till lately I say; for on Wednesday was six weeks, from about five o'clock in the afternoon, to about twelve at night, and again for some hours together, I may say, the day following, my mind was deeply affected with strong impressions to preach the gospel abroad: the event I left to the Lord, fearing to be disobedient to what, I trust, was the heavenly call. The first thing suggested to me was, to visit William Darney's societies: I accordingly met one of them about a month ago. Last week I struck out into Lancashire and Cheshire, Mr. Bennett bearing me company. We visited the societies in Rochdale, Manchester, and Holme, in

Lancashire, and Boothbank in Cheshire. O it was a blessed journey to my soul. I am determined, therefore, to add, by the divine assistance, to the care of my own parish, that of so frequent a visitation of Mr. Bennett's, William Darney's, the Leeds and Birstal societies, as my own convenience will permit, and their circumstances may respectively seem to require ; all along enquiring the Lord's will and purposes for me."

Having continued these periodical excursions into distant counties for a series of years, to the great annoyance of the clergy, they at last complained to the Bishop, in such terms as led him to think that it was his duty to lay some restraint upon this rambling and enthusiastic son of the church. He, therefore, announced his intention to hold a confirmation service in Mr. Grimshaw's church ; and expressed a wish to have an interview with him on that occasion. They accordingly met in the vestry of Haworth church, on the day appointed ; and while the clergy and laity were assembling in great numbers to see his lordship and be present at the confirmation, the following conversation took place : "I have heard," said the Bishop, "many extraordinary reports respecting your conduct, Mr. Grimshaw. It has been stated to me, that you not only preach in private houses in your parish, but also

travel up and down and preach where you have a mind, without consulting either your diocesan or the clergy into whose parishes you obtrude your labours : and that your discourses are very loose ; that, in fact, you can, and do, preach about anything. That I may be able to judge for myself, of both your doctrine and manner of stating it, I give you notice, that I shall expect you to preach before me and the clergy present, in two hours hence, and from the text which I am about to name." After repeating the text, the Bishop added, " Sir, you may now retire and make what preparation you can, while I confirm the young people." " My Lord," said Mr. Grimshaw, looking out of the vestry door into the church, " see what multitudes of people are here ! Why should the order of the service be reversed, and the congregation kept out of the sermon for two hours ? Send a clergyman to read prayers, and I will begin immediately." After prayers, Mr. Grimshaw ascended the pulpit, and commenced an extempore prayer for the Bishop, the people, and the young persons about to be confirmed ; and wrestled with God for his assistance and blessing, until the congregation, the clergy, and the Bishop were moved to tears. After the service, the clergy gathered around his lordship eager to ascertain what proceedings he intended to adopt in order to restrain

Mr. Grimshaw from such rash and extemporaneous expositions of God's holy word. The Bishop looked round upon them with paternal benignity; and, taking Mr. Grimshaw by the hand, said in a tremulous voice, and with a faltering tongue; "I would to God, that all the clergy in my diocese were like this good man." Mr. Grimshaw afterwards observed to a party of friends whom he had invited to take tea with his family that evening, "I did expect to be turned out of my parish on this occasion; but if I had, I would have joined my friend Wesley, taken my saddle-bags, and gone to one of his poorest circuits."

About the same time Mr. Matthew Mayer, of Portwood-Hall, near Stockport, was converted and came into Mr. Lowe's neighbourhood calling sinners to repentance. His first efforts were made in conjunction with John Morris, a young man from Manchester, by establishing weekly prayer-meetings at Davy-Hulme, Dukinfield, Ashton, and other places. As numbers of persons attended those meetings who were utterly ignorant of the things of God, these young men exhorted them to "flee from the wrath to come." The effects were surprising; upwards of sixty persons were awakened and added to the society at Davy-Hulme, in a few weeks after the establishment of these meetings in that village.

This was the commencement of public prayer-meetings, as a social means of grace, amongst the Methodists, in the northern counties of this country. By this experiment, they were found to supply favourable opportunities for exercising the talents of young men in exhortation and prayer ; and of training them for various departments of usefulness in the church. This was so strikingly the case in the present instance, that similar meetings were soon established in different parts of the kingdom. The blessing that came upon Obed-Edom, for receiving the Ark of God, seemed to rest upon those families, who, unmoved by the violence and execrations of the profane, threw open their doors for the instruction and salvation of their neighbours.

At Davy-Hulme, the meetings were held sometimes at the house of John Haywood, whose brother was one of the first converts, and afterwards became an Itinerant preacher, and sometimes at James Wood's, at Cross-bank farm. No sooner did James feel the love of God in his own heart, than he began to exercise his gifts as an exhorter and local preacher ; and, after a life of exemplary piety and usefulness, died " rejoicing in hope of the glory of God." He was very fond of his children, and deeply solicitous that they might be brought to God in early life. He seldom opened his lips in public prayer without

placing the spiritual interests of his family before God, and pleading that each member might be made a witness of the truth, and be preserved "blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Heaven responded to these devout and incessant supplications, and sent a baptism of knowledge and grace upon his household. His son Thomas, a promising youth, then in the nineteenth year of his age, became a sincere penitent, and was admitted into society by the Rev. Christopher Hopper. He was subsequently introduced to Mr. Wesley, who, after conversing with him for a short time, sent him at once to "call sinners to repentance."

This young man applied himself diligently and successfully to the cultivation of his mind, and made rapid progress in several branches of useful learning. On the recommendation of Dr. Olinthus Gregory, he obtained the degree of Master of Arts from the university of Aberdeen; and, after preaching the gospel in the principal circuits in the Wesleyan connexion, with ability and success, died in peace, in the sixty-first year of his age, and the thirty-ninth of his ministry. He left behind him several valuable works on Christian theology.

One Sunday evening, while the prayer-meeting was in progress at James Wood's, the "heavens were opened," and "great grace rested upon the

people." Many were in distress ; and Morris and Mayer, who conducted the meeting, were completely exhausted by their exertions. Just at this moment, Mr. Robert Costerdine, a local preacher, came into the room. Robert was a sensible man, but not very friendly to those meetings, which he looked upon as novelties in Methodism, and not much calculated to promote the calm and steady growth of experimental religion. With some reluctance he engaged in prayer ; and began in his usual slow and deliberate manner. This was but ill-suited to the burning zeal and fervent piety of young Morris ; who, kneeling beside him, whispered in his ear, " Brother, if you would fill this house with God, you must be more earnest." Costerdine elevated his voice, and quickened his utterance, and pleaded in prayer until himself and the people were filled with the Holy Ghost. From that day Robert never looked back, but soon after entered the itinerant ministry, in which he continued twenty-nine years, and lived and died a faithful labourer in his Lord's vineyard.

Mr. Mayer had a brother and sister-in-law, who lived at Dukinfield Hall. Thither he went to point out to them their need of " redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of their sins." There was a small society, not exceeding six or seven members, who met at Higham-fold, a place a little

beyond Ashton, where the travelling preachers called to preach at noon, once a fortnight, on their way from Manchester to Glossop. Mr. Mayer's sister-in-law consented to join this little society, on condition that he would come over and meet the class. He went over every Wednesday for eight or ten weeks, and she accompanied him to the meeting. Many of the neighbours came in to hear what the young stranger had to say ; for so soon as he had spoken to the members of the class, he gave an exhortation to the people. The divine blessing attended these humble but well intentioned efforts ; so that, while some were enabled to rejoice in God their Saviour, the little society increased in these few weeks from six or seven to twenty members. Among the converts was a youth of the name of Whitehead, a poor weaver lad, afterwards well known in the early annals of Methodism, as Dr. John Whitehead, one of the biographers of the venerable Wesley.

There were few towns, or even villages, in Cheshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire, the south of Lancashire, or the West of Yorkshire, where there were not many witnesses of the divine power which attended the preaching of Mr. Mayer. He frequently travelled with Mr. Wesley, was admitted to the annual Conference as a confidential friend, and often

consulted about the temporal and spiritual affairs of the connexion. It was under the preaching of this gifted laymen, that the late D. B., Esq., of Manchester, was awakened to a sense of his guilt and danger as a sinner. Up to that time D. had been a wild youth, remarkably fond of dancing, and likely to be distinguished as the prodigal of his family. After he joined the Methodist society, he became steady and even exemplary: the blessing of God succeeded the "work of his hands," so that he rapidly advanced in respectability and wealth. Meeting with young Lowe one day, who had formerly been his schoolfellow, and finding him concerned about his soul, he invited him to go to the class-meeting. Lowe yielded to the importunity of his friend, and thus commenced a union with God's people, which was perpetuated, with the exception of a short interval, for more than fourscore years, with honour and advantage to all parties. The class was met by Andrew Chadwick, a weaver; and the number in society in the whole township of Leivenshulme, did not exceed forty individuals. Young Lowe was admitted on trial by Mr. John Allen, and into society by Mr. John Pawson, in the year 1767. These ministers were then travelling in the Manchester circuit, which comprehended the whole county of Lancashire.

But although he had been influenced by the fear of God from infancy, and had, for some time, been deeply convinced of the sinfulness of sin, and under that conviction attended all the means of grace, and joined the Methodist society, Lowe had not, as yet, obtained a sense of God's favour. His own account of the circumstances under which he realized that blessing, is peculiarly interesting. This account was given with much solemnity of manner, and deep feeling: his utterance was interrupted and broken, while the big tears traced each other over his pallid but comely countenance.

“While at the class-meeting one evening,” he observed, “the members related in simple, but glowing terms, what the Lord had done for their souls during the week, and seemed to be filled with the consolations of God's Holy Spirit. I occupied the remotest corner of the room, and remained till the close of the service in exquisite distress. On returning home I retired to my bed-room, feeling the wrath of God resting upon me. I threw myself upon my knees in distraction and anguish of spirit, and breathed out the feelings of my heart, in the appropriate language of David: ‘O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak: O Lord, heal me; for my bones are

vexed. My soul is also sore vexed : but thou, O Lord, how long? Return, O Lord, deliver my soul : O save me for thy mercies' sake. I am weary with my groaning ; all the night make I my bed to swim : I water my couch with my tears. Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me : Lord, be thou my helper.' Having obtained a degree of comfort, I retired to rest. I fell asleep while the words of the Apostle shed a tranquillizing influence over all my feelings ; ' Now ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations : That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ : whom having not seen, ye love : in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory : receiving the end of your faith even the salvation of your soul.' I had no sooner fallen asleep, than, like Stephen, I ' saw the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.' He seemed wrapt in a mantle of light, and stood forth as a mediator between God and me. ' Pointing to his side, and lifting his hands, He shewed that I was graven there.' I awoke in an ecstasy of joy, with the lines of Wesley upon my lips ;—

' Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night,
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray ;
I woke : the dungeon flamed with light :
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.'

Being now brought into the liberty of God's people, every thing around me assumed a new aspect."

He was grieved, however, when he looked back upon the "unbelief and hardness of his heart," and could not comprehend by what snare of the devil he had been led to entertain such gloomy and unbelieving views of that God who had so long "waited to be gracious."

He had been perplexed, for some time, about the doctrine of justification by faith. He observed that the scriptures every where enjoined faith in the atonement, as the condition of pardon : that the preachers always exhorted penitent sinners to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," in order to the "remission of sins ;" and that his class-leader declared again and again, that until he did believe in Christ, he could not be reconciled to God. He complained bitterly, that, while he believed all that God had revealed in his word, and was looking for the forgiveness of his sins and eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ alone, he should, after all, be

regarded as an unbeliever. There seemed to be a difficulty and mystery about the believing act which he could neither comprehend nor surmount. Embracing, as he did, the divine authority and inspiration of the holy scriptures, and cordially approving of God's method of reconciling man to himself, by the blood of the cross, he felt assured that he possessed all the essential elements of evangelical faith. But his attention being directed one day to Rom. v. 1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," he perceived that "peace with God," is there represented as being at once the evidence of pardon and of the genuineness of faith. He was conscious that he had not "peace with God," and began to suspect that there was something defective in his faith. A little reflection revealed to him the fact, that, instead of employing himself in unprofitable reasonings about justification, he should, as he remarked, have gone "right away to Christ for the blessing." While, therefore, he reproached himself for having been so "slow of heart to believe," he felt thankful to God for that arrangement by which faith is made the simple and appropriate condition of salvation. Having emerged from gross darkness, "into marvellous light," from extreme misery into inexpressible joy, he began to contemplate his condition with some

degree of complacency. Supposing that he had gained the first and last victory at one and the same time, he began the triumphant song of the conqueror:

“Heaven already is begun,
Everlasting life is won!”

But while he was congratulating himself, like David, on the strength of “his tower,” and the improbability of his “being moved,” by the future trials of life, the “enemy came in like a flood,” and almost swept from its basis the “beginning of his confidence.” Some of the exercises through which he passed, at this period, were unusual and extraordinary. The reader may form his own judgment respecting the following incident; I give it in his own words:

“After a day of comparative darkness and uninterrupted and violent temptation, I went to bed with a heavy heart. Shortly after I had gone to sleep, a monstrous figure presented itself to my imagination, resembling one of the Apocalyptic beasts, and threatened to carry me away to everlasting punishment. In the agitation of the moment, I cried out, ‘I am sprinkled with the blood of Christ.’ On uttering these words, the huge figure fell back and disappeared. I instantly awoke, when

the words of the prophet were applied with great power, and administered seasonable relief to my agitated soul : ‘ Fear not, for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy God : I will strengthen thee : yea, I will help thee : yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.’ ” By increasing watchfulness, reading the scriptures, attending the means of grace, and private prayer, he recovered his confidence, and was taught to “ rejoice with trembling.”

Soon after this, in 1769, he went to Manchester to hear Mr. Wesley. He commenced the service at six o'clock in the evening ; and, after preaching, held a love-feast. Many spoke their experience with simplicity, and a deep hallowed feeling pervaded the congregation. Towards the close of the love-feast, an old man, from Ashton-under-line, near ninety years of age, stood up and said, “ Friends, it is upwards of half a century since God convinced me of sin. I remained a long time in bitterness of soul ; having no friend to whom I could open my mind. There was not then a Methodist in the world. One day, while I was wheeling turf in Ashton-Moss, I was reflecting on my guilt and misery, and sinking into despair, when it occurred to me to go to Christ as I was : and while I was repeating, ‘ Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief,’

I felt my faith strengthened and the 'love of God shed abroad in my heart.' I threw down the wheelbarrow, clapped my hands, and literally danced for joy. From that day to this, I have been enabled to 'walk in the light, even as God is in the light,' and now I feel that the 'blood of his Son cleanseth me from all sin.' " When the old disciple sat down, Mr. Wesley rose up and said, " Here is an example of primitive piety and consistency, which you Manchester Methodists will do well to imitate."

Mr. Wesley left the town on the following morning for Trevecka, to be present at the celebration of the Countess of Huntingdon's birth-day, and the first anniversary of her school. He preached on Wednesday evening to a large concourse of people, from various parts of the adjacent country. On Thursday, the anniversary services commenced. Mr. Wesley administered the Lord's Supper to the family; and at ten the public service began. Mr. Fletcher preached in the court, the chapel being far too small. After him Mr. Williams preached in Welsh, till between one and two o'clock. At two they dined. Meantime, a large number of people had baskets of bread and meat carried to them in the court. At three Mr. Wesley preached, then Mr. Fletcher; and, about five, the congregation was

dismissed. Between seven and eight, the love-feast began, at which many were comforted.

This was at the close of the Conference at which Mr. Richard Boardman, and Mr. Joseph Pilmoor offered to go to America, to help the brethren at New York. These apostolic men had neither purse nor scrip, but a collection at the Conference, "in token of brotherly love," supplied a sum sufficient to pay "their passage." The scion which they carried from the parent stem of English Methodism, they planted and watered ; and now, like the mustard tree, it spreads itself over the whole land. That peculiar form of Christianity which they established at New York, has penetrated the very core of American society, and exerted a corrective and softening influence on the savage hordes that occupy the western frontiers of that mighty continent. It has originated institutions in the cities and provinces, that give moral dignity to the country, and shed the light of science, literature, and religion, upon millions of its population. It has purified and elevated the national character, and strengthened, consolidated, and perpetuated all that was sound and valuable in the laws of the confederation. It has spoken, but in a subdued tone, on the execrable and demoralizing system of domestic slavery which obtains in that

country. It is, however, gradually lessening the distance between the several classes into which the citizens are divided; and will, in a short time, especially if it assumes a bolder attitude and discharges the full measure of its duty to man, irrespective of his colour, melt down statesmen, merchants, citizens, and slaves into one common brotherhood.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Lowe removes into Cheshire—falls away—marries—settles in business—is restored—Remarkable conversion of John Barber—Death of Mr. Lowe's mother—He becomes a class-leader—begins to preach—An earthquake occurs just before he commenced his first sermon—its effects upon the congregation—Attends a lovefeast in Macclesfield, conducted by Mr. Wesley—Mr. Wesley relates a touching anecdote of an Indian—Revival of religion in Cheshire—Proposals for publishing the Arminian Magazine—Character of that work—Mr. Lowe extends his labours—His success at Hayfield, Fernelee, and Macclesfield Forest—is seized with an alarming illness—Affliction of his family—Death of his wife and two children—is urged to give up business and become an Itinerant.

IN the year 1770, the lease by which Mr. Lowe, senior, held his farm at Levenshulme, having expired, and a relative having left him a small estate at Haddlington, near Macclesfield, he removed with his family into Cheshire. George, being separated from his first Christian friends, and neglecting to unite himself to the few indigent, scattered, and persecuted Methodists whom he found at Haddlington, gradually declined from the ways of God.

“The form of godliness,” it is true, was still retained, the Scriptures were frequently read in private, and the church and Methodist preaching room occasionally attended; but his zeal was cooled down to the temperature of the world, and the substance and vitality of religion completely lost. He was now exposed to strong temptation, and felt, at the same time, that the power of resistance was gone. Having become, like Samson, “weak as other men,” he formed an acquaintance with several gay youths in the neighbourhood, who carried him farther away from even the profession of Christianity, and had well nigh engulfed him in the vortex of worldly pleasure and sensuality.

During this period of apostacy from God and alienation from his people, he was not only “poor, and blind, and naked,” but also, in an extreme degree, “wretched and miserable.” He had, for some time, indulged in a trifling spirit, and, being fond of the society of young women, succeeded in winning the affections and securing the confidence of several. He, however, perceived this to be a snare of the devil, by which his own character and their virtue were placed in equal jeopardy, and that he had only to advance another step, when a dark shadow would be thrown over their future prospects in life, and themselves and families involved in

lasting dishonour. "His heart smote him," when he reflected upon his departure from God, his separation from God's people, the circle of light, frivolous, and irreligious companions with whom he was surrounded, and the way in which he had been led to give himself up to the direction and control of the appetites and passions of his own corrupt nature. "The bitterness of death" came over his spirit, as he contemplated the difficulties into which he had heedlessly plunged himself, and the utter impossibility of being honourably extricated from those difficulties.

In this state of perplexity and distraction, he suddenly married the object of his preference; dismissed, at once, his sinful associates; and commenced business, as a manufacturer of linen cloth, upon his father's premises. His wife was an amiable young woman, constitutionally delicate, without much energy of character, and undecided in religion. She evinced no hostility to either the principles or profession of Christianity; but, at the same time, she yielded no encouragement nor assistance to him, in the practice of its duties. He resumed the reading of God's word, secret prayer, and a more regular attendance at the public and social services of the Methodists.

It soon became apparent to William Percival, the class-leader, that Mr. Lowe was distressed about his

soul. William called on him, and found him in a "humble, lowly, and penitent" frame of mind. He persuaded him to go with him to the class meeting, where they talked to him and prayed with him, until God healed his backslidings, and "lifted up upon him the light of his countenance." This privilege he never again forfeited, but, for more than sixty years, continued "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

The conversion of John Barber, by whom this class was originally formed, was singular, and occurred long before the Methodists visited that part of the country. John had been accustomed to read the Scriptures, but especially the Psalms of David, which he esteemed above every other book in the Bible. One night, after his family had gone to bed, he sat down to peruse, for a short time, his favourite author. He opened on Psalm cxvi. 8, 12, 13, "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord." He then closed the Bible, but opening it almost immediately after, his eye fell upon the ciii. Psalm; "Bless the Lord, O my soul! and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits: who

forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases." Then turning to Psalm cxlviii., he found David calling upon all animated nature, and even the "trees of the wood," to unite in one loud and simultaneous song of thanksgivings to Jehovah! He had often remarked that the Psalmist seemed to have lived in the constant enjoyment of happiness; but he had not been able to trace the continued flow of warm and grateful feeling, pervading his writings, to its legitimate source. He now discovered, for the first time, that it arose from a consciousness of pardon, and that it was the "love of God shed abroad in his heart" that constrained him to a life of cheerful obedience to the Divine will. He shut the Bible, and, rising hastily from his chair, exclaimed, "Well! I never thought that my heart was right with God, but now I find that I have no religion at all! no religion at all!" Going down upon his knees he said, "By the help of God, I am determined to have David's religion." He continued upon his knees till after midnight, when the Comforter descended upon him, and "assured his conscience of its part in the Redeemer's blood." He then sprang into the room, where his family lay fast asleep, tore the clothes from the beds, and had his wife and children on the floor, before they were fully awake. His wife said they were terrified, for he

looked like a madman, dancing in the room, clapping his hands, then swinging his arms round his head, and crying, at the top of his voice, "Glory be to God! I have got David's religion! I have got David's religion! Help me to praise the Lord for 'his mercy endureth for ever,' and I have got David's religion!" He lived and died an eminent Christian.

Soon after Mr. Lowe's restoration to the Divine favour, and union with the Wesleyan Society, his mother's health began rapidly to decline. She had been an exemplary wife, an anxious mother, and, generally speaking, a consistent professor; but, having acquired Calvinian views of scriptural truth, among the Presbyterians, in early life, she rested all her spiritual interests, and the ultimate destiny of her soul, upon the contingency of God's electing love. She preferred the Methodist preaching house to the church, but no argument could reconcile her to their doctrine of assurance by the witness of the Holy Spirit. She maintained that the knowledge of pardon of sin is a blessing of such inestimable value, that it is only conferred upon the "excellent of the earth,"—that even amongst those it is found to be a rare attainment, and that, as she had no valid claim to the peculiar privileges of that favoured class, it would be presumption in her to expect it, and, consequently, sinful to pray for it. She repudiated

that righteousness which the Methodists described as resulting from the union of faith and works, and believed that the imputed righteousness of Christ alone formed a "wedding garment" of sufficient purity and worth, to secure for her an admission into the "marriage supper of the Lamb." As faith in the recorded truth must necessarily precede the experimental enjoyment of that truth, these unfortunate prepossessions and deeply rooted prejudices presented a formidable barrier to the happiness and salvation of her soul. Her son watched the progress of her illness with the most painful emotions, having reason to fear, that, after all, her sun would set in darkness. He frequently threw himself upon the bed, with agonized feelings, and importuned her to venture, by a penitent and believing act, upon the atonement, that she might be raised to the sensible enjoyment of peace with God. The Methodists were often assembled in her room, where they sang hymns, related their experience, read the Scriptures, and engaged in prayer on her behalf. They were thus engaged when she died. After the eye had become dim, and the power of utterance was nearly gone, she heard one of the brethren say, "If she could but believe, she would yet be enabled to rejoice in hope of the glory of God." On hearing this observation, she turned quickly round, and said,

with characteristic warmth, "Examine *yourselves*, ye Methodists, whether *ye be in the faith*." She then, with the utmost composure, adjusted her head on the pillow, commended her soul into the hands of her Saviour, and expired. This case shews the importance of conveying to the youthful mind, accurate and comprehensive views of evangelical truth. Had the way of salvation been clearly defined to her when young, she would have enjoyed more happiness in her Christian profession, and more satisfactory prospects at the time of her decease.

In 1773, William Percival, the class leader, was called into the itinerant work. William was a young man of reading, reflection, and prayer. He was exceedingly animated in the pulpit, and the tones of his voice were soft and melting. He spoke with a rapidity and pathos that shook his whole frame, and at last subverted his constitution. His intercourse with the people was frank and spiritual. He was acceptable and useful, in every circuit to which he was appointed. After labouring in harmony with his brethren for thirty years, he died of apoplexy, about the commencement of the present century, leaving a wife and ten children to deplore the loss of their best earthly friend.

The principles and stability of Mr. Lowe being sufficiently tested by this time, he was appointed to

succeed William Percival as the leader of that little band of spiritual witnesses, whom God had raised up at Haddlington. He felt the obligation to increased fidelity, which this office devolved, and consecrated himself anew and more entirely to the service of God and his Church. He became indeed "diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." His time was wholly occupied in superintending his manufactory, in watching over the interests of the infant society in the village, in visiting from house to house, and in improving himself in various branches of useful knowledge. Nor were his labours long confined to his own neighbourhood: the sphere of his operations soon extended to the villages and hamlets in the surrounding districts. In these villages he held prayer-meetings, at which he exhorted, at first from some verse of a hymn, and, subsequently, from a passage of Scripture. In these humble, but sincere and beneficial efforts to revive and diffuse the influence of experimental and practical religion, God assisted him in a surprising degree. Although he entered upon these public exercises "with fear and trembling," yet the spirit helped his infirmities," and multiplied instances of usefulness attested that God was with him.

He had often been urged, by the Preachers and others, to take a text and address a formal

discourse to the people; but he had such views of the dignity and sanctity of the office of even an evangelist, an expounder of God's word, that he could not be induced to follow their advice. These frequent conversations and discussions, however, had the effect of directing his attention more particularly to the subject, and, while they weakened the force of his objections, they strengthened his convictions, that it was his duty to call sinners to repentance. After due preparation, he preached his first sermon, at Saltersford, in August, 1777. Referring to this period, he observed, "My dress, on that occasion, was not very clerical; but, although it would have offended the fastidious taste of modern times, it was considered fashionable, and even elegant, in those days. I rose earlier than usual on that morning, spent some time in communion with God, in reading the Scriptures, and in looking over my subject. I then put on my fustian coat, a pretty red plush waistcoat, and a handsome pair of leather breeches. Thus equipped, I left home, 'in much weakness and fear,' to make, what appeared to me, a dangerous experiment. On arriving at Saltersford, I found the preaching house crowded; but being there a few minutes before the time, I stepped into an anti-chamber, for the purpose of composing my mind, and imploring the aid of divine grace. While

I was there, a sharp shock of an earthquake occurred. It shook and rocked the building, and spread such alarm amongst the people, that before I commenced the service, they were crying out, 'God be merciful to us sinners.' The text chosen on that occasion, was Mat. viii. 2, 3, 'And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean; and immediately his leprosy was cleansed.'" He represented the leper as being the type of the sinner, and pointed out the loathsome, infectious, and dangerous nature of his malady. He then adverted to the humility, importunity, and faith, which characterized his appeal to the Saviour. And, finally, called their attention to the frank, gratuitous, and complete cure effected by the word and touch of our Lord. During the delivery of this discourse, there was an abundant communication of the grace of God, to assist the preacher, and bless the people; so that, before the close of the service, Mr. Lowe's voice could scarcely be heard, amidst the loud and pathetic supplications of his hearers for divine mercy. Several scores were awakened under that sermon, many of whom afterwards joined the Society, and continued, in future years, to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

Mr. Wesley had made a tour of the county at an early period of the year, preaching in the principal towns, to considerable congregations, uniting and regulating the societies, pointing out new modes of usefulness, and quickening the zeal of both preachers and lay officers, in their respective duties. This visit was followed by such an effusion of the Holy Spirit, and such a revival of religion, as Cheshire had not before experienced. During his short stay at Macclesfield, he held a lovefeast, at which Mr. Lowe and many others related their experience. A delightful spirit of lively and fervent devotion was breathed upon the people, and several spoke on the subject of entire sanctification. One of the stewards, who had just been invested with a little "brief authority," perceiving that there was much simplicity and enlargement of heart amongst the brethren, rose up, and addressing himself to Mr. Wesley, said, "Sir, I am persuaded, that it would be very gratifying to the friends present to hear *your experience*, and especially *your views* of entire sanctification." Mr. Wesley instantly stood up, and said, with great solemnity of manner and voice, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." He then sat down: and, after a short pause, the speaking was resumed, and the meeting closed with a baptism of the Holy Ghost.

On the following day, he preached, in the afternoon, on a vacant piece of ground, called the Waters Green. A great number of persons came from the adjacent towns and villages, and "the word was with power." Though the sermon was delivered in a calm and dignified manner, it moved and affected the entire mass of living beings with whom he was surrounded. Speaking on that passage of Scripture, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another," he introduced the following illustration, "An American Indian, travelling beyond his native forests, and feeling himself exhausted by hunger and fatigue, made his way to the first settler's house within his reach. He knocked at the door, and asked for a morsel of bread. The gentleman of the house said, abruptly, 'You shall have none.' 'Then give me a draught of water,' said the Indian. 'Get about your business, you Indian dog,' said the gentleman. The poor Indian quietly withdrew from the door. Some time afterwards, this gentleman being from home on the chase, was accidentally separated from his companions, and having lost their track,

wandered about in the woods until late in the evening. When nearly worn out by the exercises of the day and the want of food, he discovered an Indian hut, which he approached. Two Indians presented themselves at the door, and welcomed him to their rude habitation. They set the best they had before him; and, after refreshing the decayed energies of nature, he lay down and fell fast asleep. The Indians loaded their muskets, and lay down, one on each side of the stranger, to protect him during the night. They rose early in the morning, and, having provided some breakfast for him, one of them accompanied him a long way, until they came to a path with which he was well acquainted. When about to separate, the Indian elevated and cocked his musket, enquiring, at the same time, 'Sir, did you ever see me before?' The gentleman, who expected to be shot upon the spot, said, 'No!' 'Then,' said his guide, 'I am that poor Indian whom you turned from your door, and to whom you refused a cup of water. Having shewn you all this kindness, I hope you will not again call the *Indian* a dog.' I have adduced this anecdote," said Mr. Wesley, "to shew the force of 'the law written on the heart.'"

Yet, notwithstanding the steady advances of the societies in Cheshire, and elsewhere, in piety and

numbers, a report was industriously and extensively circulated throughout the country, that the genius of Methodism was declining: that Mr. Wesley's artisan preachers were quarrelling about the pre-eminence, and that the societies were melting down into the church and the world. These reports, which were believed by many, were producing their usual amount of discouragement, when it was announced that the foundation of a new and magnificent chapel was about to be laid in City-Road, London. This event was hailed as forming a new era in the history of Methodism, and certainly moderated the tone of those who had confidently predicted its speedy downfall. Mr. Wesley, however, felt it necessary to bring the whole business, in a grave and formal manner, before the ensuing Conference, "I now particularly enquired," said he, "(as that report had been spread far and wide,) of every assistant, Have you reason to believe, from your own observation, that the Methodists are a fallen people? Is there an increase or decay in the work of God where you have been? Are the societies in general more dead, or more alive to God, than they were some years ago?" The almost universal answer was, "If we must know them by their fruits, there is no decay in the work of God among the people in general. The societies are not dead to God.

They are as much alive as they have been for many years. And we look upon this report as a mere device of Satan, to make our hands hang down." Mr. Wesley having confirmed the testimony of his assistants, Mr. John Hilton observed, that nothing that had been said had convinced him that the report referred to was not substantially true; and, believing the Methodists to be a falling, if not a fallen, people, he felt himself obliged to withdraw from the Connexion. Several of the preachers began to expostulate with him, when Mr. Wesley put an end to the conversation by saying, "Let him go in peace."

On returning to London, Mr. Wesley drew up proposals for the Arminian Magazine, which, being extensively circulated, spread alarm amongst the enemies of Methodism, but, at the same time, revived the hopes of the timid among the preachers and people, and counteracted, in a considerable degree, the injurious effects of the above report. This work, which has, for many years, enjoyed an extensive patronage, and sustained a high character amongst the periodical literature of the country, has enabled the Methodists to defend their somewhat anomalous position, against the unkind attacks of both Churchmen and Dissenters, and greatly promoted the edification and stability of the entire

community. The editors have usually been selected from amongst the most intelligent and judicious members of the Conference, and have been considered the authorized expositors of the religious principles and disciplinary laws of the Connexion. If one period of the early history of this publication were compared with another, and one series of its volumes with another, we are inclined to think that the palm would be awarded to the Rev. Joseph Benson, and to those volumes which were issued during the former years of his able editorship. That venerable man brought to the office a profound knowledge of Biblical criticism, accurate and comprehensive views of every branch of Christian Theology, an intimate acquaintance with the entire economy of Methodism, and a mind trained to close consecutive thinking, imbued with the love of God, and sedulously devoted to the duties of his profession.

The Conference, this year, appointed Messrs. John Shaw, Jasper Robinson, and Thomas Hanby, to the Macclesfield Circuit. Mr. Shaw was a man of moderate talent, of deep uniform piety, and of a generous disposition. His ministry, which was warm and persuasive, was made a blessing to hundreds in every circuit in which he travelled. After preaching the Gospel between thirty and forty years, he died, rejoicing in God his Saviour. Mr. Robinson was a

sensible, faithful, and useful preacher. His amiable and affable manner, his unwearied attention to his pastoral duties, together with his known integrity of principle and excellence of character, endeared him to his brethren, and secured the confidence and affection of the people among whom he laboured. Towards the close of life, he endured "a great fight of affliction," but continued happy and resigned to the will of God, and at last "finished his course with joy," in the 73rd year of his age, and the 23rd of his itinerancy. Mr. T. Hanby was a young man, far above mediocrity as a preacher; his ministry, which was attractive and impressive, was the means of awakening thousands, and of uniting and establishing God's people, wherever he travelled. His gifts were set off by "a meek and quiet spirit," and an unsullied reputation. After an undeviating course of increasing honour and usefulness, extending to about half a century, he died in the Lord, in the year 1797. Soon after these ministers became acquainted with Mr. Lowe, they insisted on his becoming a lay helper in the ministry.

At that time, the Macclesfield Circuit comprehended an extensive range of country, including a considerable portion of the forest, and stretching away many miles beyond Buxton, in the direction of Sheffield. Many of the journies were necessarily

long, and, in winter, exhausting and dangerous in a high degree. In some instances, especially in the depth of winter, the night closed in unexpectedly upon the preachers, and left them to grope their way through mountain passes, along the margin of precipices, or across the spongy morass, at the risk of their lives. At other times, they found that, during the day, the rivulets flowing along the glens which they had to cross, had swollen so suddenly, that, on attempting to ford them, on their way home, both horse and rider were carried some distance down the stream. But these "messengers of the Churches" were influenced by principles which were strengthened, rather than weakened, by the labours, privations, and dangers, by which they were so severely tested. They had been taught, from the beginning, that he who would "assume the crown, must first the cross sustain;" and while many of the clergy were looking on with apathy, and, like Gallio, "caring for none of these things," and others were hoisting the flag of open hostility, these evangelists were pouring a tide of evangelical truth over the length and breadth of their respective parishes.

But ample as was the moral field assigned to the cultivation of the preachers in the Macclesfield Circuit, it was too limited for the restless, aggressive, and burning zeal of Mr. Lowe. On those days on

which he had no regular appointment in his own circuit, he travelled to Buxton, New Mills, Mellor, Marple, Ashton, Smithy-Green, and other towns and villages, preaching in the streets, as no chapel had, as yet been erected in any of these places. On one of these excursions beyond the limits of his usual sphere of labour, he visited Hayfield, and preached in a field on Sunday afternoon, at the close of the public service in the church. A large concourse of people soon gathered around him, and while he was preaching, the power of truth, like a current of electricity, pervaded the congregation, so that many of the "barbarous people," from the adjacent mountains, stood convicted of sin, and dissolved in tears. The text was adapted to the occasion; "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Two of the most abandoned men in the country were present, and listened to the sermon with deep attention. They were both cut to the heart; but, being ashamed to give expression to their feelings in the presence of others, and unable any longer to conceal the anguish of their souls, they retired to an adjoining field, when one of them fell down upon his knees and cried out, "If what we have just heard be true, we are undone for ever!" After a little conversation and much prayer, they obtained a degree of comfort, and resolved to give up

their profligate habits, and join the society. They did so; and, soon after, one of them sickened and died. Just before he expired, he said, "Glory be to God! I am going to be with Christ which is far better!"

Mr. Lowe was now invited to go to many distant and destitute parts of the country, and, wherever he opened his commission, God was with him to save souls. A gentleman at Fernelee, in Derbyshire, who had fitted up a place of worship at his own expense, desired him to "come over and help" them. On his arrival at Fernelee, he found the preaching-house too small for the congregation. On the right of the pulpit, there stood a tall, athletic man, of a ferocious disposition, and of extremely depraved habits. He had long enjoyed a guilty preeminence over his associates in crime, and had conceded to him the distinction of being the best boxer in the country. On seeing him there, the serious part of the congregation concluded that he had come for purposes of mischief. Soon after the commencement of the service, "there was a shaking amongst the dry bones;" the people being seized with such strong and sudden conviction, that about half a score of them fell to the ground. While the preacher was urging them, by various considerations and motives, to "flee from the wrath to come," the hardy pugilist

himself turned pale, trembled, and then dropped upon the floor in great distress. The sermon was concluded abruptly, and all engaged in prayer that the great Physician would apply the balm of Gilead to heal the wounded. They soon found that the "Spirit of the Lord was upon them; to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord; to comfort all that mourned; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness: that they might be called Trees of Righteousness, the Planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified." Isa. lxi. 1—3. The fruits and effects of this gracious effusion of the Holy Spirit were seen and felt in the neighbourhood "after many days."

In another of these irregular excursions, Mr. Lowe went up into Macclesfield Forest, and assembled the people together, at the house of a pious man of the name of Shaw. Here, again, many proved that "the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Mr. Shaw's two female servants were present, and both were awakened to a

painful apprehension of that "fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation, that shall devour the adversaries." After the family had retired to rest, the young women opened their minds to each other, and agreed to spend the night in conversation and prayer. As the hours passed away, they felt increasingly conscious of the "sinfulness of sin," and resolved, as "the kingdom of God suffereth violence," that they would "take it by force." They continued to supplicate the mercy of God, "with strong cries and tears," till towards the dawn of the morning, when one of them observed, that almost the last words of the preacher, on the preceding evening, were, "Let the penitent venture upon Christ and be saved." This conveyed to her mind some idea of trusting, or believing, in Christ; and, in the act of "venturing," God pardoned her sins. She then turned round to her desponding companion, and encouraged her to make a similar "venture;" and while she was pleading with God to increase her faith, she cried out, in an ecstasy of joy, "Glory be to God! I have redemption in the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins." They then rose from their knees, and made their master's house ring with the voice of thanksgiving. The family were alarmed, and, on coming down stairs, found the servants singing a hymn, with their hands

clasped in each others, and tears of gratitude running down their cheeks.

But amidst all these labours and successes, Mr. Lowe was like the poet ;—

“ Though blest himself,
He mourned another's part.”

At this juncture, Divine Providence was preparing a cup of domestic and personal affliction, so deep, so full, and so pungent, that it required all his Christian fortitude to sustain its effects. His wife, who had been in a state of considerable debility, prior to her confinement, died suddenly in child-bed. At the time of this bereavement, he had four children, and was himself confined by a malignant fever. For some time his life seemed to be suspended in the balance ; but, by the blessing of God, he recovered from this severe illness and resumed his duties as a class-leader and local-preacher. During this sharp and protracted affliction, his mind was mercifully kept in a state of calm submission to the divine will, and he came out of it “ like gold seven times purified,” His deceased wife was the object of his tenderest regard, and when he placed her remains in the tomb he resolved that no mere creature should again engross his affections. In the

observance of this resolution, he was conscientiously scrupulous; for, although he lived fifty-nine years a widower, he at no time took a single step towards forming a new matrimonial alliance. Nothing but the peculiarity of his circumstances, and the strong conviction of duty by which he was actuated, could have justified the resolution itself, or the inflexibility with which he adhered to it. "I believe," said the late Doctor Adam Clarke, "that it is the will of God, that every son of Adam, should be united to a daughter of Eve;" and certainly, the Christian minister, of all others, requires those elements of social enjoyment which only woman can supply. Mr. Lowe felt acutely the increased claims of his motherless children upon his time, sympathy, and care; and at once diminished the number of his public engagements and narrowed the sphere of his labours, that he might be able, as a Christian parent, to meet those claims. This was a great trial of his faith, for his soul burned with zeal for the glory of God, and his heart was wrung with pity for the perishing multitudes around him. "The harvest truly was plenteous, but the labourers were few." He prayed, indeed, that "the Lord of the harvest would thrust out more labourers into his harvest," yet he was deeply concerned that family ties should prevent him from acting upon the principle involved

in his own prayer. These ties, however, were about to be dissolved, by a process which seemed as mysterious as it was afflicting. While he was adjusting himself to his circumstances and labours, and availing himself of every opportunity and means, for "spreading abroad the savour of Christ:" all his children were seized, about the same time, with a dangerous illness. After lingering long and suffering much, two of them died, and the other two slowly recovered. So soon as the wound inflicted upon his feelings by this stroke was, in some degree, healed, the Revs. Messrs. Bradford, Benson, and others, urged him to give up business and devote himself wholly to the ministry. They had long wished him to become a standard-bearer in the "sacramental host;" but he met all their reasonings on this subject, by a feeling reference to his small and dependent family. But now that it had pleased God to remove his wife and all his children but two, they maintained that it was his duty to submit to the judgment of his brethren, and "separate himself to the work" of the ministry, to which they believed him to be called by the Head of the Church.

CHAPTER IV.

Mr. Lowe's distress of mind respecting his call to the Ministry—The distinction between a call to preach and a call to the pastoral office—The call of Matthias, successor to Judas—The Apostles did not ordain men of their own order—their successors men of an inferior order—The Church must respond to the call of God—The perplexity occasioned by uncertainty as to the validity of the call—Remarkable expedient employed by a Scotch clergyman to determine the reality of his call to the sacred office—Mr. Lowe examined, approved, and appointed to Chester circuit—His first sabbath, his fears, his success—His early rising—His ministerial and pastoral habits—His charity—The duty of the Church to provide for its own poor—The conversion of the late Mrs. Ann Warren, wife of Dr. Samuel Warren—Mr. Lowe's removal to Blackburn—is brought into collision with Popery—Surprising instance of the power of truth in the conversion of a Papist—Protestants admonished to watch the aggressions of Popery—Discussions in Parliament about the Test and Corporation Acts—The Slave trade.

THE importunity of his brethren led Mr. Lowe to examine himself more closely as to his call to the pastoral office. His mind had already passed through a succession of trying and distressing exer-

cises on this subject ; but now he added fasting to prayer, that he might obtain the divine direction, and be prevented from incurring the responsibility and guilt of those who "run before they are sent." The subject so completely engrossed his thoughts by day, that it not unfrequently obtruded itself upon the hours appropriated to sleep. He spent a considerable part of the night in addressing large assemblies, which his own fancy had called into being, on the duties of religion and the solemnities of eternity. When he awoke, he found his whole frame in a state of feverish convulsiveness, and his pillow moistened with tears which he had shed, because he could not persuade them to repent.

He thought he observed a wide distinction between the office he had hitherto sustained, as a lay helper, and that of having confided to him an ecclesiastical right to administer the ordinances of Christianity. And as certainly as a man may have the gift of preaching, and yet not the gift of governing, so certainly may a man have a call to preach, and yet not a call to watch over the flock "as an overseer." Hence, a call to preach does not necessarily imply a call to the "work" of the ministry. The one is from God, the other from the Church. The one is as essential as the other. "The power," says Mr. Wesley, "to call men to preach the Gospel was with

God alone: He only can make the prophetic office powerful to the conversion of souls. The office of Pastor necessarily involved the existence of a flock, that is, a church, of professing Christians; and with the superintendants of these churches, remained the power of the choice of electing from among them, such as should also join with the call of God, the choice of his Church, in order to administer among them those ordinances which Christ had left with his Church, as a perpetual memorial of himself."

It has been attempted to prove that this position is untenable, by an argument derived from the method adopted by the primitive Church, to supply the place of Judas and complete the apostolic number. And it must be admitted, that, in that particular instance, so far from considering the call of the Church *essential* to the validity of the ordaining act, it was not deemed necessary at all. The Apostles nominated two individuals, but the elective prerogative was exercised by Christ himself. Their presenting Barnabas and Matthias was tantamount to saying, "Lord, were we to fill up the vacant office, we would appoint one or other of these brethren," but, having done this, they appealed to the omniscient and infallible Head of the Church: "they prayed and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these two *thou hast chosen*. And

they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias: and he was numbered with the eleven Apostles." But, although the Church had no voice in the election of Matthias, it should be borne in mind that the case was an extraordinary one, and not intended to be a directive model for the subsequent ages of the Church. It was not only a minister of character, piety, and ability, that was wanted, but one who should be a "witness of the resurrection" of our Lord Jesus Christ. "Of these men," said Peter, "which have companied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, *must* one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."

As so much stress has been laid upon this case, by various contending parties, it may not be irrelevant to remark :—

1. That the successor to Judas was to be chosen from among the men who had learned the doctrines of Christianity from the lips of our Saviour himself, and been eye witnesses of the miracles by which he proved that those doctrines were of God.

2. He was to be able, from personal knowledge, to corroborate the testimony of the apostles, by "having companied with them, all the time that

the Lord Jesus went in and out among them ;” comprehending the entire period of his ministry, “beginning with his baptism by John,” and ending “on the day that he was taken up from them.”

3. The individual thus called and qualified to be a “witness,” of what he had “seen and heard,” was not appointed to office by the apostles, for they did not ordain each other ; and the “lot which they gave forth,” was only the means they employed to ascertain the will of God in this emergency. Hence, it is said, that, when the “lot fell upon Matthias,” he was *numbered*, not chosen, but accounted, or acknowledged by the whole church, as being of equal authority “with the eleven apostles.”

4. As the apostles were called, qualified, and appointed immediately by Christ himself, who also retained and exercised the sole right of filling up the vacancy occasioned by the death of Judas, it seems obvious to us, that they never had authority to ordain men of their own order, and, consequently, could not convey to others, a title to office which had not been conveyed to themselves. If these reasonings be just, it indisputably follows, that apostolic succession, as now contended for, is a mere figment.*

* These principles are identical with those, for which many of the most distinguished statesmen contended, at

5. The twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles, may be regarded, as constituting two distinct orders of extraordinary men, placed by divine providence at the heads of their respective dispensations, and enjoying gifts and endowments peculiar to their own order. The most ardent aspirant for ecclesiastical preferment and apostolic dignity, would quail, if required to produce, as the condition of his elevation, "the signs of an apostle." If there had been a succession of office, there would have been a succession of qualifications for its duties. But as these qualifications were suspended at the close of the apostolic age, we may conclude, that the office itself and after the Reformation,—such as Cecil, Knollys, Lord Bacon; and also the whole of the Protestant churches at that period. Tindal, Barnes, Lambert, Cranmer, Tunstall, Stokesley, Jewel, Redman, Robertson, Willet, Bedel, and many more might be adduced, as witnesses in support of the same principles. Jewel, Stillingfleet, and Archbishop Whateley, of Dublin, have admitted that apostolical succession wholly fails as obtained from the church of Rome, from which many of the protestants have derived their orders. Scotland, when her form was Presbyterian, gave many orders to the English clergy. Butler was baptized by a Presbyterian—Secker was Primate of all England, with the same baptism. He ordained presbyters, and bishops, and consecrated two kings. Tillotson was the son of a Baptist; there is no evidence that he ever was baptized. Charles, the martyr, was baptized at Dunfermline, by a Presbyterian minister.

ceased, and that the immediate successors of the Apostles were, in many respects, a *new* and an inferior order of spiritual instructors. They were still furnished "with power from on high;" and "the weapons of their warfare were mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds, and to the bringing into subjection every thought to the obedience of Christ;" but they could not say "Take up thy bed and walk!"

As all other offices in the Church were subordinate to that of the apostolic, so a very different mode was adopted in the choice of individuals to fill them. In the appointment of deacons, the apostles

1. Recognized the right of the church to nominate to that office, "look ye out," said they to the brethren, "among yourselves seven men, whom *we* may *appoint* over this business."

2. They did not consider the exercise of this right, on the part of the church, as placing them under any obligation to ordain the persons so nominated, unless they were found, upon trial, to be "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom."

3. Being satisfied as to the fitness of the men, the apostles "prayed and laid their hands on them," thus responding to the call of the Holy Ghost, and ratifying the act of the church. It will be in your recollection, that, while the "prophets and teach-

ers," in the church of Antioch, were ministering before the Lord, and fasting, the Holy Ghost told them, that he had assigned to Barnabas and Saul a particular sphere of labour. Instead, however, of supposing that the call of the Holy Spirit was sufficient, they proceeded, at once, in the exercise of their ecclesiastical authority to "separate Saul and Barnabas for the work whereunto" they had been called. Acts xiii. 1, 2. "Is it not evident," says Doctor Adam Clarke, "that when the elders of the church of God have good reason to believe that He has called certain persons to the work of the Ministry, and qualified them for that work, they should proceed as the elders of the church of Antioch did: and, by *fasting, prayer, and imposition of hands*, separate those persons for the work whereunto God has called them. Such persons will consider themselves *accountable to God and his church*, and should take care how they use the *gift received from both*." But it is objected, "When God has called and given authority, there is no need of ordination or appointment from man." I would just ask the objector, "Why, then, when God called Barnabas and Saul to the work, did he command the church to *separate them* to him for that *very work*? And why did they *fast, pray, and lay hands upon them*?" Hence, he that preaches

“without being sent,” can neither expect to save himself, nor them that hear him : and he that assumes the pastoral office, without the call of the church, invades an office to which he has no legitimate claim. For, although God has reserved to himself the sole right of calling the preacher, he has conceded to his church the right of examining the gifts and qualifications of the candidate, and of inducting him, if approved, into the pastoral office. God gives the pastoral authority, but the Church gives the opportunity for exercising that authority : and no man should conclude that he possesses the authority to whom the church denies the opportunity. This distinction has been, and continues to be observed, by all scripturally constituted churches both at home and abroad. By not recognising this distinction, lay helpers have occasionally risen up in the Methodist connexion who have taken upon themselves to exercise the pastorate, after the ecclesiastical courts had declared them to be wholly incompetent. These rash and inconsiderate men have generally forced themselves into the office :—

1. By creating schism in the church ; and, 2. By seceding, with their party, from the church

A just deference to the principle involved in the above distinction, would have led these erring brethren back to their former position of local usefulness and influence.

Mr. Lowe had such views of the duties and responsibilities of the ministerial office, and of his own want of learning, theological resources, and maturity of judgment and experience, for the successful discharge of its duties, that he looked upon it with apprehension rather than desire. He had been truly converted from the principles and habits of sin, and was endeavouring "to perfect holiness in the fear of God." He had also done the work of an evangelist, with comfort to himself, with benefit to many souls, and to the entire satisfaction of the church; but he considered every wish to be invested with the pastorate, as proceeding from the pride of his heart, and he therefore endeavoured to suppress it. What he had accomplished had been done in sincerity, and God had given him "seals to his ministry." It was the contemplation of the future that filled him with perplexity. A dark cloud seemed to rest upon his path, and concealed from his view even the probable issue of the journey. Reading the third chapter of St. Paul's first epistle to Timothy, one day, he was much struck with the first verse: "If a man *desire* the office of a Bishop, he *desireth* a good work." He now perceived that the "office;" might be the object of sanctified desire, if the wish connected the "work" with the "office," and that he had, in all probability,

grieved the Holy Spirit by repelling such *desire*, as often as it had presented itself to his mind, under the impression that it proceeded, in his case, from creaturely ambition ; and yet, when he came to reflect maturely upon the subject, it was obvious that the “office” did not present itself under circumstances which were calculated either to awaken or gratify human ambition. It stood before him denuded of ease, affluence, and distinction ! The only recommendation which it offered were indigence, labour, reproach, and “eternal life.” It could not, therefore, be desired for its own sake, but only as it opened “a great and effectual door” to more extended usefulness. He often repeated the following lines of Wesley, as being affectingly descriptive of his views and feelings, and supreme wishes, at this period :—

“ If so poor a worm as I
May to thy great glory live,
All my actions sanctify,
All my words and thoughts receive :
Claim me for thy service, claim
All I have, and all I am.

“ Take my soul and body’s powers,
Take my memory, mind, and will :
All my goods, and all my hours,
All I know, and all I feel :
All I think, or speak, or do ;
Take my heart :—but make it new ! ”

Few that have not passed through the same ordeal themselves, can form a just estimate of that distress of mind which is occasioned by a state of uncertainty and indecision respecting the ministerial call. It is nearly thirty years since I received from the lips of an intelligent and devoted minister in Scotland, an account of the following singular incident:—"When I was a young man," said he, "I was riding into the country one afternoon to expound the scriptures at a farm-house. On the way I had been thinking about my call to the ministry, and my mind had been busily employed in collecting a variety of evidence with a view to establish, upon a satisfactory basis, the validity of my claim to that sacred office. I had been called by the church, and put into the office in the usual way: but it was not clearly made out to my own reason and conscience, that I was called of God. I was in great perplexity, and resolved to return home and give up preaching altogether, until this momentous question should be finally settled. Yielding to this impulse, I turned my horse and commenced my journey homeward. My mind, however, was confused and unhappy, especially when I thought of the little congregation which would be disappointed and grieved: that it was not necessary for me to have preached: I might have read a portion of

scripture, given a short exhortation, and prayed with them. These reflections produced a change in my views and feelings, and I wheeled round and rode back again. On turning from the main road, I had to pass through a gate that opened into a lane, which led to the farm house to which I was going. On coming within sight of the gate, it occurred to me, to ask God to relieve me from the mental torment I was enduring, by giving me "a sign from heaven." I lifted up my heart in prayer that he would send an angel to open the gate, promising, at the same time, that, if in condescension to my weakness he would answer this prayer, I should never again doubt, but would serve him with diligence and faithfulness all the days of my life. I no sooner began to advance towards the gate, than an indescribable dread came over my mind, lest I should have been guilty of presumption and sin, in asking such an interposition of providence. But what were my feelings, do you suppose, when I actually saw the gate gradually open and fall back upon its hinges. I felt God to be there, raised my hat from my head in astonishment, and was for some moments in an ecstasy of joy. As I was riding away from this consecrated spot, and meditating on the scene I had just witnessed, it was suggested that, in all probability, it was the devil that opened the gate,

for the purpose of deceiving me : at least, I had no evidence that it was not the devil : I saw nothing : I heard nothing : and, if I had seen an "Angel of light," I might, even then, have been imposed upon, as the devil can appear in that form. That, as the master sin of the Jews consisted in their attributing the effects of Christ's miraculous power to Satanic influence, so I had been guilty of a similar offence in ascribing to God, what, in all likelihood, was the work of the devil. I endeavoured to persuade myself that this was a mere temptation, and to recover the mind to the belief that it was God that opened the gate, but I could not. I was now worse than ever, being almost distracted. Just at this juncture, the exhortation of Paul to Timothy, came to my recollection ; 'Make full proof thy ministry.' With this passage new light was shed upon the whole subject ; and I saw at once, that the 'proof' of the ministry referred to, was to be derived from its effects. This interpretation of the passage seemed to be confirmed by reflecting, as I rode up the lane, upon our Lord's commission to Paul : 'I now send thee to the Gentiles. To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified, by faith that is in me.' While

the objects specified in this commission were announced as certain and definite, the Apostle was taught to look to the outward and visible effects of his ministry, for the confirmation of his call to this stupendous enterprise. Well, I thought, I am going to speak to the people, this evening, in the name of God. Who can tell, but he may give me *one* seal to my ministry? and O, if he would give but *one*, what relief and encouragement it would afford. I dismounted and commenced the service: the Lord 'confirmed the word of his messenger,' and several were thoroughly awakened to a conviction of their sin and danger. I was satisfied; and, having 'obtained help of God, I continue to this day, to preach,' to perishing men, 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.'

Mr. Lowe had abundant evidence that he had not "run in vain, neither laboured in vain:" but it was with great reluctance that he consented to place himself at the disposal of the church. Although he mourned with the deepest sorrow, to see the world in ruins, and his soul yearned with pity for his own relations and neighbours, who were living in ignorance and dying in sin, while "no man seemed to care for their souls;" yet he felt apprehensive lest the incessant and wasting labours of the itinerancy should soon drain both his mental and

physical resources, and his office be rendered contemptible by his imbecility. And yet, this very *apprehension* is the most valuable guarantee the church can receive, that the candidates whom she admits to her altars, to conduct her services, shall prove "faithful men." It is the principal element of that which the scriptures term "godly fear," and never fails to generate an habitual spirit of vigilant self-inspection, and to fortify the principle of humble but firm confidence in God.

After passing through that rigid examination, as to moral character, personal piety, acquaintance with christian theology, ability and aptitude to teach, and spiritual fruit, which the ecclesiastical forms of Methodism require, Mr. Lowe was "thrust out into the ministry." He was appointed to the Chester circuit, in the year 1788, and in the 38th year of his age. His mature age affords presumptive evidence that the church had not laid her hands "suddenly upon him," and that he was not "a novice," likely to be "lifted up with pride," and so to "fall into the condemnation of the devil." Instead of bringing to the exposition of scripture, and the supervision and direction of the spiritual and secular affairs of religious society, the rashness and impetuosity of youth, he was prepared, by previous reading, experience, and observation, to be "an example

of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, and in purity."

On arriving in Chester, he found himself in somewhat difficult circumstances; but he entered upon his public duty "determined not to know anything among men, save Jesus Christ and him crucified."

On the morning of the first Lord's day he preached from—"Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." On commencing his sermon, he observed the preceptors of two classical academies, with their pupils, seated before the pulpit. The appearance of so much intelligence and learning, almost deprived him of the power of utterance. In a short time, however, he recovered his self-possession; and poured forth upon his hearers such a continual stream of evangelical sentiment, and with such rapidity and fervour, that they were both surprised and affected. He entered the pulpit in the evening, painfully apprehensive, lest he should not be able to reach the same elevation of feeling, nor enjoy the same liberty of speech, nor succeed in producing the same visible effects upon the people, as in the morning; but it seemed to himself, and to those who heard him, as if the Lord had said,—
"From this day, will I bless thee." He selected John iii. 36, as the subject of his discourse: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he

that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” While he explained the nature of *faith* and *unbelief*, and described their effects upon the experience and destiny of man, a sacred influence pervaded the congregation, and many were constrained to exclaim, “what must we do to be saved ?” Mr. Lowe’s attention was particularly directed to a young man, whose convictions were so deep, and his distress of mind so great, that he appeared, for some time, to be in convulsions. The friends cried to God in his behalf ; and he soon found “peace in believing.” This young man was subsequently called to the ministry ; and, after a brief career of fidelity and usefulness, “died in the Lord.” The labours and successes of this first sabbath, gave a fresh impulse to the faith and zeal of the preacher. He renewed his covenant with God, and again consecrated his time and talents to the service of the Church. He carefully considered the number and relative importance of the various duties devolving upon him, on the one hand, and the expectations and claims of God’s people on the other, and resolved to be conscientious and punctual in every thing. The salvation of men, the primary object of the Christian ministry, filled his mind, and absorbed all the physical and intellectual capabilities of the man. He continued his practice of

early rising, and prosecuted his morning studies with such method and judgment, that his "profiting" was as obvious to others, as it was beneficial to himself.

Doctor Clarke once observed, to the writer of this narrative, that Mr. Wesley succeeded, in a surprising degree, in grafting his own habits upon the preachers of his day; that nearly all the junior ministers were induced, by the force of his reasonings and example, to adopt the practice of early rising. Upon Mr. Wesley's principles and example, the Doctor's own character was formed; and, it was his inflexible adherence to this practice, that carried him forward to such pre-eminence in the literary world. He sometimes placed his young friends in difficulties, by his interrogatives on this subject. Entering the breakfast parlour, one Monday morning, about eight o'clock, when he resided at Haydon Hall, he said, addressing himself to the writer, "I have been at work yonder," pointing with his finger in the direction of his study, "for the last four hours; I shall be glad to know how *you* have been occupied during the morning." I replied, "Oh, delightfully!" Perceiving, by the expression of his countenance, that he considered the answer indefinite and unsatisfactory, and that he was about to require an account of the work done, I immediately added—"You must recollect, Sir, that

I walked sixteen miles yesterday, preached three times, administered baptism and the Lord's Supper. I maintain, that, after such a day's work, it was but an act of heathen justice, fairly due to exhausted nature, to indulge the body with a little more sleep than usual this morning." After a significant toss of his head, which, after all, left it doubtful as to whether he conceded that point, he expressed himself strongly respecting the brevity of human life, and the necessity of continued attention to the cultivation of the mind, as well as to the health and comfort of the body. I observed, "that it had always been a cross to me to rise at four in the morning, at that season of the year,—the depth of winter; and that, notwithstanding I had the benefit of his example, I found it impossible to convert the practice of *very* early rising, into that source of enjoyment which it seemed to be to him. That I was at a loss to know whether this was the effect of a bad habit formed in early life, or whether it might not be some constitutional defect, some 'thorn in the flesh,' which could not be eradicated. That I had been protesting and praying against it for several years; yet still it lingered, and seemed to be a most inveterate, if not an incurable evil." "My dear brother," said the Doctor, pleasantly, "you have entirely misapprehended the case. The remedy is

simple and of easy application. It has been a maxim with me, through life, never to trouble the Almighty about things which I ought to do myself. Hence, instead of lying in bed and praying on the subject of early rising, I get up at the appointed hour, dress myself, and go at once to my study and my books. If you take my advice, you will act, in future, upon my maxim."

Mr. Lowe had placed himself so completely under the discipline and control of the Doctor's maxim, during the entire period of his public ministry, that, when forced into comparative retirement, by the infirmities of age, and verging upon ninety years, he was accustomed to rise before the break of day. Being anxious to become a "scribe well instructed" in the things of God, his reading was select. He had a taste for works on history, science, and mental philosophy; but he felt it to be his duty to moderate that taste, that he might devote the greater portion of his time to the study of Christian Theology. He believed that all the doctrines of divine revelation, however profound, are to be submitted to the investigations of human reason, and that the biblical student ought not to be deterred, by their apparent depth and mystery, from a careful examination of the evidence by which their absolute truth and importance may be established. That, although some

bold and ardent men had carried reason out of the province assigned to her by the Creator, yet, in his opinion, that did not form a sufficient ground for narrowing her range in the field of legitimate enquiry. These convictions led him to look at the whole question of God's moral government, and the entire economy of our redemption. The Sermons of Mr. Wesley, which he had read with attention and frequency, gave him very comprehensive and accurate views of these subjects; whilst the Journal of that venerable man, which was always a favourite book with him, quickened the activity of his faith, and fanned the flame of his zeal. But the Bible was the quarry, out of which he worked the principal materials embodied in his public discourses. He would often take that sacred book into his hand, clasp it to his heart, and, with a countenance elevated towards heaven, and expressive of the most delightful emotion, exclaim—

“When quiet in my house I sit,
Thy book be my companion still;
My joy thy sayings to repeat,
Talk o'er the records of thy will,
And search the oracles divine,
Till ev'ry heart-felt word be mine.

Rising to sing my Saviour's praise,
Thee may I publish all day long;
And let thy precious word of grace,

Flow from my heart and fill my tongue;
Fill all my life with purest love,
And join me to the Church above."

He bestowed considerable labour and pains upon his sermons. They were lucid, embodied much Scripture sentiment, and were delivered in an impressive manner. Ministerial usefulness, constituted, in his judgment, the essence of ministerial greatness. His ministry, like that of the Apostle, was *admonitory*, he "warned every man,"—*instructive*, he "taught every man,"—*diffusive*, he taught them "in all wisdom;"—and his *object* was the same,— "that he might present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." But the most prominent and influential topic with him, was the love of God in the redemption of the world by the death of Christ. He adopted the expository method of preaching; but whether the subject was the law of Moses, the writings of the Prophets, or the sublime truths recorded by the Evangelists, he never closed without bringing his hearers to the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." Looking upon the cross of Christ, as the "Tree of Life," and believing that the "*leaves* of it" were sufficient to "heal the *nations*," he gave a hearty invitation to the spiritually sick, to partake of its fruit, that they "might not perish, but have everlasting life."

We have known ministers, of various denominations, who have felt the recreations of literature so seductive, and the demands of the pulpit so incessant and heavy, that they have neither had time nor inclination for the duties of the pastoral office. But although Mr. Lowe felt a laudable ambition to maintain the efficiency of the pulpit, and, in order to this, laboured diligently that he might keep in advance of the people, in all necessary and useful attainments, he suffered nothing to interfere with the pastoral duties. Wherever danger threatened, the spiritual watchman was there to announce its approach, and afford his assistance in warding it off. In the discharge of these duties, many a wanderer from the fold of Christ did he reclaim. Many a prodigal did he recover from the paths of ignorance and vice, and add to the fellowship of God's people. Many a desponding sufferer received "the Comforter," while he knelt at his bed-side, and made "known his requests," unto Him who is "mighty to save." In this important sense, he was the "*servant* of all," moving in every direction, being "instant in season, out of season," that he might promote the unity and increase of the church of Christ. And then such was the depth and expansiveness of his benevolence, that "a poorer than himself, he could not see." It is true that his income

was very limited, but he practised self-denial, that he might relieve the destitute. The aged, the widow, and the fatherless, were the special objects of his sympathy and charity. He received six shillings a week for board and lodging, and three pounds a quarter for general purposes; but out of this small salary, he had to pay for the support and education of two little daughters. The Apostle says, that the "Bishop," or overseer of God's people, "*must be given to hospitality;*" and what, we may ask, can be more in accordance with the office, or more congenial with the feelings of the Christian pastor, than to be the almoner of the church's bounty to the poor? It obviously *devolves* upon the church to supply the means. But we are told that in this country, at least, the state, in the exuberance of its charity, has relieved the church from her solemn obligations. But who would insult the majesty of Christian charity by affiliating on her the wretched, squalid, vagrant offspring of the state? That compulsory system contravenes the laws of God, by its interference with the relations of man and wife, and offers the highest indignity to suffering humanity. In the prisons and penitentiaries, there is a classification of offenders; but in the national workhouses, the godly matron, who for half a century maintained a respectable *status* in

society, and was only reduced to poverty by unforeseen and unavoidable calamity, is associated with the prostitute, and compelled to mingle with the promiscuous aggregate of the nation's profligacy and licentiousness. Can the church be guilty of a greater dereliction of duty, than to allow her members, who have attended her solemnities and supported her institutions, to have their principles assailed and their last moments embittered by the ribaldry and profaneness of the workhouse. We doubt whether the church will recover her pristine glory, unless she proceeds, at once, to make some distinct and suitable provision for her own poor.

Small, indeed, were Mr. Lowe's means ; and yet few applicants were turned away without his assistance and blessing. It was his uniform practice, when the weather permitted, to spend the Saturday evening in meditation and prayer in the fields and woods in the neighbourhood of Chester. These exercises he continued, until he received, like Moses, an assurance that "God would be with him," on the following sabbath. "By these means," said he, "I learned the meaning of that passage of scripture, 'they obtained promises.'" The exhortation of Paul to Timothy was constantly before his mind, and strengthened the principles of caution and industry : "study to show thyself approved unto God, a work-

man that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

It was during this year, and under the ministry of Mr. Lowe, that the late Mrs. Anne Warren, wife of Dr. Samuel Warren, formerly a Wesleyan minister, was converted and added to the society. A memoir of this distinguished woman, elegantly written, was published by her husband, soon after her decease. In that edifying volume, the strength and compass of her mind, her pre-eminent piety, together with the perfection of her Christian character, are developed with much tenderness and fidelity. As the Chester people were obliged, agreeably to the usages of Methodism, to take a married preacher at the close of that year, they were under the necessity of giving up Mr. Lowe. Their feelings of respect and affection for him, he fully reciprocated; and the separation cost him many a tear. "The retrospect of the past," said he, "filled me with humiliation and sorrow: for whether I reflected upon my spirit, my conduct, or my ministry, in Chester, I saw much cause for self-reproach. But, on the other hand, I could not recollect the intimate communion I had enjoyed with God, nor the seals he had added to my ministry, without being led to thank him and take courage."

At the Conference, he was appointed to labour in

the Blackburn circuit. In this new sphere of operation he was brought into immediate contact with popery. The agents of that system had spread themselves, like the locusts of Egypt, over the whole neighbourhood; and, while they intercepted the rays of evangelical truth, and darkened the moral atmosphere, they transfused the essence of their own malignity into the souls of the people. They visited from house to house, boldly maintaining that there was no salvation out of their church; that the Methodist preachers were "wolves in sheep's clothing;" and that there was no validity in Christian ordinances, as administered by them. By their zeal and earnestness they subverted the faith of some, and brought a temporary blight upon the societies, by the unprofitable discussions and reasonings they occasioned. Mr. Lowe had no taste, nor indeed ability, for controversy; and, believing that noisy declamation was not the best way to check the progress of error or promote the cause of truth, he relied upon the efficacy of the Gospel, which he preached with increasing simplicity and energy, waiting upon God, at the same time, in constant prayer, that the people might be led to receive that Gospel, "not in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." None of their Jesuits could outdo him in pastoral visitation; so that he traced their steps

every where, neutralized their influence, and, wherever he found they had deposited their poison, he took care to exhibit the antidote. When he observed any of his flock to have received favourable impressions respecting Popery, that their minds were wavering and unsettled, and that they were anxious to argue the points at issue between the Protestant and Catholic churches, he would simply remark, "The impressions of error seem to be so deep, that I fear any arguments I might advance would not remove them, but, 'with God, all things are possible.'" Then, throwing himself upon his knees, he would call upon the "Spirit of truth" to descend upon the family, and save its members from the fate of those who "believe a lie and are damned." He also began to work on the aggressive, and, by visiting the Catholics at their own houses, and explaining to them the way of salvation through faith in Christ, he won several trophies from the "man of sin."

About four miles from Blackburn, there lived a woman of the Catholic persuasion, whose case excited the pity of Christians of various denominations. Both her health and spirits had declined, and she appeared to be gradually descending into a premature grave. The cause of her distress, she said, was the state of her soul. She had been to confession, and acknowledged herself to have been guilty

of a most aggravated sin. The priest prescribed severe penance, and requested her to return as soon as she had performed the duties enjoined. The poor creature submitted to the painful discipline imposed, and then went to the priest, in great heaviness of heart, but in hope of obtaining absolution. Whether he did not consider her sufficiently penitent, or whether her means were insufficient to purchase his benediction, did not appear, but he positively refused her absolution, and expressed a doubt, as to whether that particular sin, could be forgiven. She now concluded that her case was hopeless. The anguish of her soul was great, and she doggedly abandoned herself to despair. While thus pining in solitude, several sensible and pious persons in the neighbourhood, visited her; to whom it soon became obvious, that both faith and hope were extinct in her mind. The only reply she made to their kind inquiries was, "I deserve to go to hell, and am now willing to go to purgatory, I feel quite resigned." As Mr. Lowe was coming into the village to hold a lovefeast, some of her Christian friends urged her to open her mind to him. She at last consented to his calling at her house. On his arrival, she conducted him into a private room, but remained sullen and reserved. He insisted on knowing the reasons that had led her to suppose that she could not be saved. After

evincing some reluctance, she at last named the sin that had pressed with so much severity on her conscience, and observed, that the priest considered it a crime of great atrocity, and while *he* refused to administer absolution, it was impossible for her to be reconciled to God. Mr. Lowe admitted, that the sin was one of peculiar magnitude and aggravations, but told her, that it had not been committed against the priest, but against God ; that it was the prerogative of God to forgive sin, and that he had absolutely promised to forgive "all manner of sin." He then explained to her the nature and object of the atonement of Christ, and the necessity of faith in that atonement. He concluded by urging her to come at once, confessing her sin, and expecting that God, for Christ's sake, would "blot out all her iniquities." This interview so far influenced her judgment and awakened hope, that she accompanied him to the lovefeast. The people were simple, lively, and spiritual, and a deep sense of the divine presence rested upon them. This meeting presented a new scene to the catholic : she wondered, wept, and prayed ; she was that day, saved from despair and the superstitions of popery ; and, although she did not profess to have obtained pardon, yet her appearance and conduct were visibly changed. She unhesitatingly renounced

Popery, embraced the Protestant faith, and had a prayer-meeting established in her own house.

The Protestants of Great Britain and Ireland will do well to examine that corrupt form of Christianity, that modification of popery, which is now recommended to them by the patronage of both statesmen and bishops. Popery is a religion that fills the minds of its votaries with terror and dismay! That will prostrate their wives and daughters before the confessional of the priest, and extort from them the most latent emotions of the heart. It is a religion, that, after all that has been said to the contrary, *inculcates* the murder of heretics! A religion that sends the rich to paradise, and the poor to purgatory! A religion that ascribes as much virtue to the bones and relics of a sinner, as to the sacrificial death of the Son of God! A religion that sanctions equivocations and reserved senses, even in oaths! A religion that teaches man to withdraw his confidence from God, and to place it in the Virgin Mary, images, and saints! A religion that is nothing but “sounding brass and tinkling cymbals;”—without humanity, purity, or any other attribute of goodness! In fine, it is the religion of Popery! From this religion, “good Lord, deliver” my country! The voices of a “great multitude which no man can number,” who “resisted unto

blood," striving against this very popery, — myriads of infant spirits, the murdered offspring of a licentious priesthood,—the convulsive groans extorted through successive ages by the wheel of the unholy inquisition,—and the oracles of the living God, add an emphatic—Amen !

In the month of March, this year, the king, who had been for some time incapacitated for public business, by mental derangement, was suddenly restored to the use of his faculties. The tidings of his recovery diffused the most general and heartfelt satisfaction. A national thanksgiving was appointed, and the king himself went in solemn procession to the cathedral of St. Paul, to offer up to the Almighty his grateful devotions on this occasion. His recovery was also celebrated throughout the kingdom by splendid illuminations, and all the other accustomed demonstrations of joy. It is to this event that Cowper alludes in his *Annus memorabilis* for that year :—

“The spring of eighty-nine shall be
An æra cherish'd long by me,
Which joyful I will oft record,
And thankful at my frugal board ;
For then the clouds of eighty-eight,
That threaten'd England's trembling state
With loss of what she least could spare,
Her sovereign's tutelary care,
One breath of heaven, that cried—Restore !

Chased, never to assemble more :
And for the richest crown on earth,
If valued by its wearer's worth,
The symbol of a righteous reign
Sat fast on George's brow again."

In May, an attempt was made to repeal the corporation and test acts. In the debate to which it led, the Honourable Charles James Fox laid it down as a primary axiom of policy, "That no human government had jurisdiction over opinions as such, and more particularly over religious opinions. It had no right to presume that it knew them, and much less to act upon that presumption. When opinions were productive of acts injurious to society, the law knew when and how to apply the remedy. If the reverse of this doctrine were adopted, if the actions of men were to be prejudiced from their opinions, it would sow the seeds of everlasting jealousy and distrust ; it would give the most unlimited scope to the malignant passions ; it would incite each man to decide the opinions of his neighbour, to deduce mischievous consequences from them, and then to prove that he ought to incur disabilities, to be fettered with restrictions, to be harrassed with penalties. From this intolerant principle had flowed every species of party zeal, every system of political persecution, every extravagance of religious hate. There were many

more, not of the establishment, to whose services their country had a claim; surely a citizen of this description might be permitted without danger or absurdity to say, though I dissent from the church, I am a friend to the constitution; and on religious subjects, I am entitled to think and act as I please. Let not Great Britain be the last to avail herself of the general improvement of the human understanding. Indulgence to other sects, a candid respect for their opinions, a desire to promote charity and goodwill, were the best proofs that any religion could give of its divine origin." The motion, however, was lost by a small majority.

The slave trade, which had become the theme of public execration, was brought under the notice of Parliament by Mr. Wilberforce. Lord Penryn asserted, in the course of the debate, that, "to his knowledge, the planters were now willing to assent to any *regulation of the trade*, short of its abolition." In reply to this remark, Mr. Fox declared, with great vehemence and solemnity, that "he knew of no such thing as a *regulation of robbery*, and *restriction of murder*. There was no medium: the legislature must either abolish the trade, or plead guilty to all the iniquity with which it was attended." The further consideration of the subject was deferred till the next session.

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Lowe is appointed to Thirsk—Affecting scene in a public house—Removes to Barnard Castle—His Colleague addresses a letter to the King—The effects of the French revolution upon this country—Character and proceedings of the revolutionists—Burke's address to the House of Commons respecting these proceedings—Anecdote of Mr. Wesley and Mr. Michael Fenwick—The death of the latter by lightning—The schoolmaster of Scargill, and his daughter, converted under peculiar circumstances—The Preachers of Mr. Lowe's day not politicians—not controversialists—Character of their ministry—Mr. Lowe appointed to Chester—his fidelity as a pastor—Death of the Rev. John Wesley—Mr. Charles Wesley suspended from being organist to George IV—reason of that suspension—Conduct of the King and Lord C. on that occasion—Expectations of the enemies of Methodism, on the death of its founder—Fears of its friends—Public opinion divided as to his motives and objects—His character by a modern writer of another community—Testimony of Dr. Clarke to his intellectual and ministerial greatness—The disturbed state of the nation—The steady progress of Methodism.

AT the Conference of 1790, Mr. Lowe was appointed to Thirsk, in Yorkshire. After a short visit to his friends at Haddlington, he left that village on horse-

back, and rode to Middleton, a distance of twenty miles, where he stopped at a public house to refresh himself and his horse. On entering the house, he found about twenty rough Lancashire men, half drunk and very noisy. He laid down his saddle bags, and was going out to give the ostler directions respecting his horse, when he heard them saying to each other, "A Methody parson! a Methody parson!" On his return from the stable, he found they had agreed to make themselves merry at his expense. He ordered bread and cheese, and a glass of porter; but no sooner had he taken his seat, than a tall, handsome, lively young man rose up, and commenced dancing round the table, and, each time he passed Mr. Lowe, he flung his leg over his head. The companions of the young man were exceedingly amused at this, and seemed to think, that, as the preacher continued to eat his bread and cheese in silence, he was dreadfully frightened. The young man went on without interruption, dancing, and singing a licentious song, which, in derision of the Methodist preacher, he concluded with "happy, happy, happy," until he was completely exhausted, and then threw himself upon a chair in the corner of the room. Mr. Lowe rose up hastily, and, taking his chair with him, crossed the room, and, placing himself in front of the young man, held him fast in

the corner. Then, putting on a stern countenance and elevating his voice, he addressed him in a most impressive manner :—" You have been singing about happiness," said he, " what do you know of happiness? Are you happy? ' You are of your father the devil,' and the children of the devil are miserable! You will find him a hard master; 'The wages of sin is death.' Poor youth, you seem to be nearly worn out in his service, and, unless you alter your course, you will soon be with him in hell! It is impossible you should live long at this rate; and, if you have any parents alive, your conduct is enough to break their hearts." The profligate turned pale and hung down his head; at the same time, the boisterous mirth of his companions subsided, and they sat speechless. As soon as the youth could give expression to his feelings, he said, " I thank you, master, for this severe reproof. No one has said so much to me before for my good. I know that I am going headlong to destruction! I have run my country; and, as for my parents, they know not where I am, nor what has become of me. But I will give it all up; yes, I have gone quite far enough; I will return to my parents; I will set out for home this day!" Mr. Lowe, being obliged to resume his journey, the young man followed him along the road, crying like a child, and thanking

him for his advice. When he could no longer keep pace with the horse, he fell into the rear, and, at a considerable distance, his voice was heard, saying "Farewell, master! Farewell, master!" Who can tell, but the seed thus sown, under peculiar circumstances, and in an unpromising soil, subsequently vegetated and yielded "much fruit," which has long since been gathered into the "garner of God." "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

Mr. Lowe pursued his journey, and, in a few days, arrived at Thirsk, the place of his destination. On his arrival there, he found a letter from Mr. Wesley, stating, that several important reasons had led him to alter his appointment, and that he must leave Thirsk immediately, and go on to Barnard Castle. He reached the latter place in two days, and found that his colleagues, George Holder, Jonathan Heron, and Michael Fenwick, had entered upon the labours of the year. This sphere of duty was but ill adapted to the feeble state of his health, which had been impaired by a severe fever, from the effects of which he was just recovering. To go once round this newly formed circuit, was a journey of four hundred miles, and occupied a preacher just eight weeks! What,

it may be asked, but the love of Christ could have induced these self-denying men, whose salaries were exceedingly small, to submit to a life of incessant and wasting labour, in a bleak and mountainous country, and amongst a poor and scattered population? God, however, "caused them to triumph in every place;" giving them seals to their ministry and souls to their hire.

It was during this year, that Mr. Lowe's colleague, Mr. Michael Fenwick, addressed his celebrated letter to the king. The political horizon of Europe had, for some time, assumed a dark and portentous aspect. Indeed, some years before the French revolution, several persons on the Continent, who styled themselves philosophers, conspired against God and Christianity, without distinction of worship, whether Protestant or Catholic, Anglican or Presbyterian. "The grand object of this conspiracy," says an eminent French writer, "was to overturn every altar where Christ was worshipped. It was emphatically the *antichristian* conspiracy. This school of impiety soon formed the *sophisters* of rebellion; these combining their conspiracy against kings, with that of the *sophisters* of impiety, coalesced with that ancient sect whose tenets constituted the whole secret of the occult lodges of free-masonry, which long since, imposing on the credulity of its most dis-

tinguished adepts, only initiated the elect into the secret of their unrelenting hatred to Christ and kings. From the *sophisters* of impiety and rebellion, arose the *sophisters* of anarchy. These latter conspired not only against Christ and his altars, but against *every* religion, natural or revealed ; not only against all civil society, but even against all property whatsoever. It was the coalition of the adepts of *impiety*, of the adepts of *rebellion*, and of the adepts of *anarchy*, which formed the *club of the Jacobins*. Under this name, common to the united sect, and derived from the name of the convent they had seized upon to hold their sittings, the adepts followed up their triple conspiracy against God, the king, and society."

The first of these conspirators, was Marie Francois Aronet. Through vanity he changed his name to Voltaire. He was a man of great abilities, and aspired to a complete dominion over the literary world. Unfortunately, in his own heart were concentrated all those passions, which render distinguished talent dangerous to society, and led him, from his early youth, to direct them all to the overthrow of religion. While only a student of rhetoric, in the college of Lareis-le-grand, he drew on himself the following rebuke from his professor, the jesuit Le Jay, "unhappy young man, you will one

day be the standard-bearer of infidelity." On leaving the college, he neither sought nor loved any society, but that of men whose dissipated habits were calulated to stimulate and confirm his incredulity.

He "swore to dedicate his life to the accomplishment of the overthrow of Christianity," and kept his oath. "Twelve men," said he, "were necessary to set up Christianity, but I will show to future ages, that one philosopher was sufficient to pull it down."

Finding, however, the necessity of associates in this enterprise, he chose D'Alembert, who was a learned, prudent, reserved, and crafty dissembler. He multiplied and directed their agents, initiated and trained the commonalty, and conducted an extensive correspondence; whilst Voltaire, conjured kings, emperors, princes, and priests, against God, and expected the nations, from London to St. Petersburg, from Sweden to America, to do him homage. These two addressed themselves to Frederick II., king of Prussia. They flattered his vanity by calling him the "Solomon of the North;" but he was a mere philosophic pedant, less cruel, it is true, than Julian the apostate, but more artful and perfidious. A single sentence will develope his religious belief. He maintains, in letter number 30, dated October

1770, "that man is not two-fold, that he is matter animated by motion; that there exists no relation between animals and the Supreme Intelligence; and that death is an eternal sleep." Let these sentiments obtain in any community, and the great motives and incitements to the exercise of self-restraint, and the cultivation and practice of social and public virtue, are at once removed. As to Diderot, the fourth, hero of the conspiracy, he positively asserted, "that between himself and his dog, he knew of no other difference but that of their dress." "Voltaire, was always impious,* but rendered

* His royal friend, admirer, and fellow-infidel, Frederick, says of him, "He is habitually gay, yet grave from restraint; frank, yet not candid; loving pomp, yet despising the great; polite on a first approach, he soon becomes freezingly cold. With great sensibility, he forms but few friendships, and abstains from pleasure, only from the absence of passion. He reasons without principle, which is the cause that he, like the herd of mankind, is subject to fits of folly. With a liberal head, he has a corrupted heart. A libertine without stamina, a moralist destitute of morality, and vain to the most supreme degree; yet is his vanity inferior to his avarice. He is a politician, a mathematician, an experimental philosopher; in fine, he is whatever he pleases. But, wanting powers to be profound, he has only obtained a desultory knowledge of the sciences; and, were it not for his wit, would not have distinguished himself in any of them."—*Posthumous Works of the King of Prussia*, vol. 5, by Holcroft.

miserable by his doubts; Frederick, impious and profane, but professedly free from doubts; D' Alembert, impious, but impervious to remorse; and Diderot, by turns atheist, materialist, deist or sceptic; but ever impious; ever violent, the better fitted to accomplish the various parts he was destined to act." Such were the men who conspired to subvert the thrones of Europe, to eradicate religion from the minds of men, and form the civilized world upon the principles of their philosophy. With them, the altars of London or Geneva, of Stockholm or Petersburg, were to share the same fate with those of Paris or Madrid, of Vienna or Rome, thus adding, by their fall, a new, though tardy proof of the universality of this conspiracy.

The means they employed in the prosecution of their object were various. The press was seized as an important medium for diffusing their philosophy among mankind. The *Encyclopædia*, was speedily projected: a work which was to be adapted to the different orders of society, from the manufacturer to the labourer, and form a vast emporium of all the sophisms, errors or calumnies, which were ever invented against religion, from the first schools of impiety, down to the day of their quadruple alliance. This book created a great sensation in the literary world. The first direct attempt against the church,

was an attempt to extinguish the Jesuits. These formed a body of twenty thousand men, spread through all catholic countries, and particularly charged with the education of youth. They were called the "life guards of the Pope." By the reiterated appeals of the philosophers, Rome was at length compelled to declare the "total extinction of the order." Being encouraged by past successes, they next proceeded to secure the extinction of "*all religious orders.*" It was now resolved to inundate Europe with antichristian publications, in which the principles of universal equality should be strongly and earnestly inculcated. A national convention was formed, which assumed the prerogatives of the crown, and exercised all the functions of government. From the monarch, the fury of factious hatred descended to inferior victims. It was declared necessary to rid the country of intestine enemies, before foreign invaders were attacked; for this purpose the prisons were visited, and all persons who were guilty of entertaining any regard for religion or monarchy, were put to death in a summary manner, and with the most atrocious malignity. Adherents of the royal family, and priests who could not conscientiously comply with the decrees of the revolutionists, mingled their blood in such rapid succession, that during one week, more than five thou-

sand victims fell in a relentless massacre. The fiercest savages could not have accomplished a more sanguinary triumph. From rage against their fellow creatures, they ascended to blasphemy against God. They not only renounced Christianity, and cast every kind of insult upon religion; but with an infernal spirit, scarcely credible, they abjured the worship of a Supreme Being, and professed atheism, denying a future state, and the immortality of the soul. The calender was modelled upon a purely pagan system, the sabbaths, and festivals, and observances of Christianity, being expunged. The churches, which before had been sacriliciously plundered, were ordered to be shut altogether, and all honour, humanity, justice, and religion, vanished from the land.

In the meantime, the principles of democracy, encouraged by the progress of the French revolution, were spreading with rapid contagion in this country. Clubs and associations were formed in different parts of the kingdom, whose objects were to panegyrisé the exploits of the French reformers, and to propose them as models for imitation, to scrutinize with severity all the real or apparent defects of the British Constitution, to denounce all establishments as corrupt and arbitrary, and to propagate the spurious notions of universal equality. These "swellings and

tumults of the people," had, for some time, engaged the anxious attention of the government and senate of Great Britain. In allusion to the political and religious changes in progress, in the various states of Europe, Mr. Burke observed, that "The French had shown themselves the ablest architects of ruin that had hitherto appeared in the world. In one short summer, they had completely pulled down their monarchy, their church, their nobility, their law, their army, and their revenue. Were we absolute conquerors, and France to lie prostrate at our feet, we should blush to impose upon them terms so destructive to all their consequence as a nation, as the durance they had imposed upon themselves. Our present danger, from the example of a people whose character knows no medium, is, with regard to government, a danger from licentious violence -- a danger of being led from admiration to imitation of the excesses of unprincipled, plundering, ferocious, bloody, and tyrannical democracy -- of a people whose government is anarchy, and whose religion is atheism. He declared he felt great concern that this strange thing, called a revolution in France, should be compared to that glorious event commonly called a revolution in England. We did not impair the monarchy. The nation kept the same ranks, the same subordinations, the

same franchises, the same order in law, the revenue, and the magistracy, the same Lords, the same Commons, the same corporations, the same electors. The church was not impaired; her estates, her majesty, her splendour, her orders, and gradations continued the same. Hence the state flourished; Great Britain rose above the standard of her former self. All the energies of the country were awakened, and a new era of prosperity commenced, which still continues, not only unimpaired, but receiving growth and improvement under the wasting hand of time."

At the same time that the frame-work of society seemed to be breaking up at home, England was threatened with a continental war, and the validity of her claim to the sovereignty of the East was about to be tested on the plains of India. During the progress of these stirring events, the government was threatened by one party, eulogized by another, and counselled by a third. Amongst others who supposed that the British Constitution required some modification, was Michael Fenwick, the Wesleyan Minister. He was a sensible man, of some reading, and of good address. He supposed that his profound knowledge of the science of civil government, qualified him to give such instruction and advice to the king, as would, at this juncture of public affairs, lead to a new and improved national policy. His

intentions were, no doubt, duly appreciated by his Majesty, but the effects of his communication upon the movements of the political machine were not apparent.

Notwithstanding the excellent and amiable qualities which characterized the disposition, life, and ministry of this good man, he was subject to a constitutional vanity, which led him to court notoriety. He more than once intimated to Mr. Wesley, that it would be very agreeable to him to see his name associated with those of other eminent and remarkable individuals, in the pages of his journal. When the next journal issued from the press, great prominence was given to Michael's name, but, unfortunately, it was coupled with circumstances which rendered its insertion anything but a mark of distinction:—"I left Epworth," says Mr. Wesley, "with great satisfaction, and, about one, preached at Clayworth. I think none was unmoved, but *Michael Fenwick, who fell fast asleep under an adjoining hay-rick.*" This was one of the expedients employed by Mr. Wesley, to cure Michael of what he was accustomed to call his "coxcomicality." His eccentricities became so great, that he was not appointed to a circuit, nor was he acknowledged as a preacher for several years before his death. He was "cut down," in a moment, by a flash of lightning,

during a violent thunder-storm; but he was observed, for some time before, to have drunk deep into the Spirit of holiness. His conversation was in heaven, and he frequently expressed his earnest desire to depart and be with Christ. On the day before he died, he spoke of *sudden* death as very desirable, and also observed, "If the Lord call me *suddenly*, I am ready to go!" It is perhaps not unworthy of remark, that a pious woman in that neighbourhood, dreamed, the night before Mr. Fenwick was killed, that she was standing at her own door, and, looking up, she saw the heavens open, and two angels descend to the very place, the mill, where he and his companion fled for shelter from the storm, and, in a short time, she saw them ascend towards heaven again, with a glorified spirit accompanying them; and, as they ascended, she distinctly heard their voices singing Hallelujah, and she exclaimed, "It is the voice of Mr. Michael Fenwick, the preacher, that I hear!" This dream the woman related to several persons, previous to the awful circumstance occurring; this put it beyond the possibility of being fictitious.

A singular incident occurred in a village called Seargill, in Mr. Lowe's circuit, the first time he preached there. When he entered the preaching room, he found it excessively crowded, and, amongst others present, were the schoolmaster and his daugh-

ter. On casting his eye upon the preacher, the schoolmaster became very much agitated, and whispered to a neighbour, who sat next to him, "two years since, I dreamed that myself and daughter would be converted under a sermon from John iii. 14, 15, 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.' The size and figure of the preacher were clearly defined in my dream, and I am sure that is the very man." Mr. Lowe commenced the service, and the schoolmaster felt as if he received "a message from God," when the above text was read as the subject of discourse. While the preacher described the circumstances under which the serpent was lifted up "in the wilderness"—the *authority* by which it was "lifted up"—its *sufficiency* as the medium of healing to the Israelites—the *simplicity* of the means employed, that of "looking to the serpent of brass"—and the *consequences* of rejecting this remedy: giving to the whole, an evangelical application, and urging upon them the necessity of an immediate reception of Christ as a Saviour; the schoolmaster and his daughter "felt the powers of the world to come;" and, after seeking and finding mercy, they united themselves to God's people.

Men of Mr. Lowe's order, formed their ministry upon the apostolic model. They dwelt chiefly upon the elementary truths of revealed religion, and the first "principles of the doctrine of Christ." They kept one object constantly in view—the salvation of men's souls ; and neither the convulsive heavings of society, at home, nor the "rumours of war," from abroad, could divert their attention from that object. It was not their indifference to the great political questions, which then agitated the nation, that preserved them from being swamped in the general vortex of party politics, but the "love of Christ which constrained them," to "give themselves" *wholly* to their official duties. Nor could they be drawn aside, by the popular religious controversies of the day. Those controversies were, in some instances, carried on by men graciously imbued with the "meekness and gentleness of Christ;" who were actuated by an intense desire to elucidate doctrinal truth, and adjust their different forms of church government to the scriptural platform ; and who brought into the arena a surprising amount of general knowledge and sanctified learning. But others of these disputants, waged an aggressive war against all that presumed to question the perfection of their system, or the truth of their theological dogmas. Hence, the distance between the contending parties was widened,

a spirit of bitter recrimination was generated and diffused, and the minds of God's people perplexed and discouraged by unprofitable reasonings. Into the polemics of the times, Mr. Lowe, and the men of his class, did not enter. The original dignity of man—his subsequent apostacy—the consequences of the fall to himself and his posterity—the necessity of redemption, and the sufficiency of the Christian atonement—the inspiration of the Scriptures and the offices of the Holy Spirit, formed the staple commodities of their discourses. But, to the doctrines of repentance—the method of a sinner's justification before God—the nature and effects of faith in Christ—and the fruits of the Spirit, they gave a special prominence.

Nor were they satisfied with a bold and scriptural avowal and exposition of these subjects ; they made the most illiterate amongst the people comprehend and feel them to be instinct with "the inspiration of God." Thousands who refused their message, were yet constrained to say, "these men are the servants of the most high God, who show unto us the way of salvation." They brought into their office many peculiarities, and a great "diversity of gifts ;" but their theme was uniformly the same—salvation to the lost ! salvation now ! They yearned over the guilt and misery of their fellow-men, and "counted

not their lives dear unto themselves," if they might "recover them from the snares of the devil, who were taken captive by him at his will." They always stood with the gates open, ready to receive such as were "fleeing from the wrath to come," into the city of refuge; and no hero ever exulted, with greater magnanimity and joy, over the trophies of victory, than they did, in witnessing the adversaries of the cross bending under the sceptre of Christ, and saying with "Saul vanquished," "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

It was the object and tendency of their labours to bring men into this state. With a view to this, they shewed, with great force and perspicuity, that God could not consistently justify man, but upon one of two conditions, namely, by the "works of the law," or by the faith of Christ. That no man could be saved by the former was obvious, because the covenant of works was adapted only to a state of Adamic perfection. Hence, as it did not contemplate sin, it made no provision "for the remission of it." As human nature was adequate to the full measure of duty imposed upon it by its Creator, that covenant offered no help to man in the form of grace. The penalty of its violation was death! They unveiled the attributes of God, and advanced the claims of his justice, to the perfect allegiance of man, so as to

awaken the sinner to a sense of the danger and helplessness of his condition. Having thus cut off all hope of salvation, "by works of law," and shewn him that his soul was "in jeopardy every hour," they proclaimed the coming "curse," and breathed into "the terrors of the Lord," such a spirit of earnestness and pity, as constrained him to exclaim, "Men and brethren what must I do?" They gave him to understand, that he had reached an awful crisis; that he was like a traveller who, having arrived at the junction of two road-ways, pauses to determine which he will take; that on the left, leading to guilt, misery, despair, and damnation; or, that on the right, leading to "glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life." That now he had the right of choice; but, if he hesitated, he might be deprived of that right in a moment and for ever! With him, therefore, it was *now or never*! Being brought to a conformity to these views, he was prepared to receive that glorious truth, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and, for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in them, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The whole of the evan-

gelical covenant was then briefly, but fully laid open, and faith described as the principal means of introduction to the enjoyment of its manifold and invaluable blessings. This faith was represented as being a divine principle, and as "coming by the word of God." It was therefore held, that in the act of "hearing the word of God," a man occupies the most favourable position for receiving and exercising this faith. There is, at that moment, a happy concurrence of circumstances. Just as in the case of Peter, while he "was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison," he was unconscious of his situation, and incapable of escaping from the danger to which he stood exposed. But when "the angel of the Lord came upon him," and "raised him up," and removed the "chains from off his hands," and conducted him past "the first and second ward," and through "the iron gate that led to the city;" all the blessings of personal liberty were placed within his reach, and he "escaped from" the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the Jews." The gospel not only finds man as the angel found Peter, but it also "proclaims liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Those who, on hearing the "proclamation," believe it, are saved. Although queen

Esther had forfeited her life, by a deliberate violation of the law, yet, by advancing into the king's presence, *when he held out the "golden sceptre that was in his hand,"* she obtained favour in his sight, and moved him, "by her petition," to save herself and her countrymen. The waters of Bethesda had no inherent virtue in themselves to heal the "multitude of impotent folk, of blind, of halt, and withered," who lay in the "five porches of the pool;" but "at a certain season, an angel went down into the pool and troubled the water; then whosoever first stepped in, after the troubling of the water, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." When the physician is present, that is the time for having the remedy successfully applied! Thus, by seizing the opportunity when it presented itself, Peter escaped from the murderous "hand of Herod;" the impotent man was healed of his malady; and queen Esther became instrumental in saving a nation from destruction. The same promptitude and decision are necessary in order to salvation. It is the office of the Christian minister to point to the "golden sceptre" of mercy, and encourage the penitent sinner to approach it with confidence; "for whosoever" touches it believingly, "shall not perish, but have everlasting life:"

“ Into himself he all receives,
Pardon, and holiness, and heaven.”

The preachers to whom these observations refer, never gave up the contest with their hearers, until they were either converted to God, or left without a “cloak for their sin.” But, while they were “sons of thunder,” to the wicked of every grade, they were emphatically “sons of consolation,” to all “who mourned in Zion.” And at the same time, that they avoided all interference with the private and secular affairs of their people; they entered with much sympathy and feeling into the various sources of their personal and family trials. Having themselves tasted the “gall and wormwood,” and been the subjects of strong temptation and domestic affliction and bereavement, they were well able, and always willing, to “succour them that were tempted.” The dying debauchee, “mourning at the last, when his flesh and his body were consumed, and saying, how have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me,” found them at his bedside ready to direct his eye, “closing in death,” to him who alone could “pluck him as a brand from the burning!” They heard the history of the prodigal from the lips

of his parents, and while they "wept with those that wept," they encouraged hope respecting him and strengthened their confidence in the providence and faithfulness of God. When an unexpected calamity overtook any of the families of their people, they were presently there, to "justify the ways of God;" to explain and enforce the painful duty of resignation to his will. The anxious enquirer was directed "into the good old way," and relieved from his perplexity by a seasonable and judicious application of the promises of God. Cases of conscience were resolved, and the understandings and judgments of weak believers cleared from much misleading and dangerous error. "As good stewards of the manifold grace of God," "they warned the unruly, they comforted the feeble-minded, they supported the weak, they were patient toward all men." And, although their success was not commensurate with either their labours or their reasonable expectations, yet they had the gratification of seeing their societies, "walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, and being multiplied."

Mr. Lowe, passed the following year, 1791, agreeably and usefully in the Chester circuit, with Parson Greenwood and James Thorn, for his colleagues. He had spent the first year of his itinerancy in this city, and was well acquainted with the several

societies comprehended in the circuit, and the character and habits of the people. He renewed his covenant with God, and commenced his labours with increased zeal and devotedness. Conscious of his call to the high office he sustained, and viewing with deep concern the important consequences pending upon the faithful discharge of its duties, he determined to "save himself and those who heard him." Thirsting after personal holiness, and believing it to be their privilege to participate with him of "the divine nature," he put forth all his energies, both in public and private, to lead them up to this exalted attainment. With a view to this, he made himself acquainted with the families attending the different places of worship in which he officiated. When it was practicable, he spoke to the unconverted members of these families by themselves, administering to each person suitable advice and admonition, and uniting with them in prayer, for the enlightening and saving power of the Holy Spirit. To such members as were professors of religion, he used "great plainness of speech," enquiring into their Christian experience, their attention to the important duties of self-denial, self-examination, and secret prayer, and shewing them how much their progress in the divine life, depended upon a strict and conscientious attention to these duties.

Believing the sabbath to be a divine institution, and its religious observance to be greatly promotive of the personal and social happiness of man, he seldom failed to ascertain whether it was so "remembered," as to be "kept holy," by the families he visited. Where he discovered any remissness in this respect, he urged upon them an entire suspension of all secular duties, and the consecration of the day to an orderly attendance on the public means of grace, to a more copious and solemn exercise at the family altar, to the catechising of their children and servants, and to the cultivation of mutual forbearance, forgiveness, and love. On these occasions, he was at due pains to lay open the whole question of parental duty and domestic discipline. He reprehended, in the strongest terms, the conduct of those parents who carry a large professional "light" into the church and the world, but place it "under a bushel" at home; who evince much zeal in "seasoning" others, with the "salt" of a nominal Christianity, while they take no pains to preserve "their own households" from the "corruption that is in the world through lust." It is proper enough that a man should assist his neighbour to repair his fences, to clear out his drains, and to prepare his field for the reception of the seed in

spring; but he should take care that his own estate be not like the "garden of the sluggard."

Mr. Lowe had a great affection for children and young people, and, wherever he laboured, he sought, by every prudent means, to bring them to an early acquaintance with God, and union with his church. In his pastoral visits, he was in the habit of collecting the juvenile members of the family into one apartment, when he gave out a hymn, read, explained, and applied some portion of God's word, and concluded the little service with prayer, to the mutual satisfaction and edification of all present. The minister is never more in his place, than when thus "watching over the flock," strengthening the bonds of union between himself and the church, and hallowing the firesides of his people by his godly counsels and fervent prayers. It is surprising how much real and permanent good may be done in this humble department of ministerial duty. The field of the Christian pastor is extensive, and its cultivation difficult and laborious, but its yield is certain, rich, and abundant; and, as "the labourer is worthy of his hire," he may expect to reap "an hundredfold in the world to come." The preacher may be the object of *universal admiration*, but the pastor will be recognized as the *confidential friend*; the preacher may *dazzle* and *attract* the masses, but the pastor will

command their *respect* and *esteem*; the preacher may "slay his thousands," but the pastor will "slay his tens of thousands;" the preacher may multiply materials for the spiritual temple, but the pastor must work them into form, and put them in their relative places, so as to give strength and beauty to the whole structure; the preacher is the "messenger of the churches," but the pastor is "the glory of Christ."

On the second of March, this year, the Wesleyans sustained a severe loss, in the death of their venerable founder. He died in the arms of his niece, Miss Sarah Wesley, to whom his dying observations were addressed, and who was accustomed to repeat them in her social intercourse with her friends, with great minuteness of detail and warmth of feeling. The writer of these "Recollections" had the privilege of listening to her affecting narrative, during her visit to his family, while resident in Windsor. She was accompanied by her brother Charles, whose features very much resembled those of his uncle, the Rev. John Wesley. The occasion of his visit was painful to himself, but highly honourable to his principles and character. He had, for many years, been organist to the royal family. George IV. had a great respect for him, and a high opinion of his professional abilities. His Majesty frequently remarked,

when speaking of the splendid execution of Wesley, "He is a first-rate performer; he can make the instrument do every thing but speak!" One Sunday evening, while the King was at the pavilion in Brighton, he had a numerous and brilliant assembly of the nobility. His private band, who were in attendance, were commanded to perform several pieces of music. The music was of a mixed character, some grave, and some gay—some sacred, and some sufficiently profane. Wesley, as usual, presided at the organ. During the evening, the King advanced to the organist, and, spreading a sheet of music before him, remarked, "This is a new thing; it has just arrived in this country, and I desire you to play it." Wesley, after running his eye over it, and stretching his finger across the keys, paused, and, being struck with the grossness of its sentiments and its peculiar time and character, turned round and said, with considerable emotion, "The kindness of your Majesty will, I am sure, excuse me from performing this difficult and complex piece, at first sight, and on the *Sabbath evening*." His Majesty marked the emphasis, and perceived where the objection lay. He instantly bowed acquiescence and resumed his seat.* A less objectionable piece was

* The King could command great apparent equanimity and dignity of bearing, even under strong feelings of excitement.

selected, and the performance went on ; but, after a short time, the musicians were ordered to withdraw.

Mr. Wesley was painfully exercised in his mind respecting this occurrence ; for, although conscious he had done right, he was apprehensive lest his conduct, which was liable to misconception, should have given offence to the King. In a few days he was relieved from suspense, but his worst fears were more than realized. He was suspended from his office, appointed organist in *ordinary* to the King, and never again performed in his presence. His object in visiting Windsor, at the time referred to, was to obtain a personal interview with his Majesty, for the purpose of explaining his views and feelings relative to the whole affair. Lord C—, who was then Lord Steward of the King's household, received

When Lord B—— was a great favourite at court, and in the habit of taking unusual liberties with his Majesty, he laid a wager one night before supper, that he would make the King his valet. He watched his opportunity ; and, on the King's retiring from the supper table, and placing himself upon a couch by the fireside, his Lordship turned round hastily, and said " Will your Majesty do me the honour to ring the bell ? " His Majesty bowed and rang the bell. Lord B—— was in ecstacies ! The page entered the apartment, but, before Lord B—— had time to speak to him, the King said, sternly, " Order Lord B.'s carriage." It was no time for apology, and Lord B—— retired and returned to London that night.

him with great cordiality. His Lordship was much attached to Wesley, and evinced a perfect readiness to give him the full benefit of his interest and influence with the King, on any occasion, and in any way that he might consider for his advantage. But after Mr. Wesley had stated the particulars of the case, and expressed a wish to see the King, his Lordship observed, that, "As it regarded the unhappy event that had occurred at Brighton, he really dared not to interfere; and, knowing, as he did, the strong impression it had made upon the King's mind, he could not anticipate any favourable result from a personal interview." Mr. Wesley was excessively grieved and mortified; but, perceiving that the business could not be prudently prosecuted further, he returned to London considerably depressed.

The enemies of Methodism had looked forward to the death of its founder with hope. They expected, that when the rectoral authority of Mr. Wesley came to be exercised by a great deliberative assembly, like the Conference, there would be a fierce ecclesiastical war for the pre-eminence; that a divided council would lead to a divided administration, and a speedy dissolution of the whole system. Some of its warmest friends were not without serious apprehensions, lest the removal of its presiding genius should lead to such a catastrophe. This fear was

salutary, and brought all parties into a more intimate alliance and a more determined and hearty co-operation, in devising the most judicious means for warding off so great a calamity. Preachers and people simultaneously covenanted anew with God and each other, and "from that day he blessed them." In many respects, Methodism assumed a new form, and, being better adapted to the exigencies of the times, advanced with unprecedented rapidity, in numbers, in intelligence, in wealth, and in national influence.

It was impossible that a man like Mr. Wesley, whose course had been so peculiar, and who had occupied so conspicuous a place before the public eye, for so long a period, should be suffered to descend into the grave like other men. Numerous friendly and hostile pens were speedily employed to analyze his creed, to criticise and lay open his motives, and censure or eulogize the whole tenour of his conduct. The churchman denounced him, for his apparent inconsistency, in maintaining membership with the church, and avowing his attachment to her formularies; while he repudiated her discipline, and extended an undivided patronage to what they considered a rival institution. His *professed* object was to revive religion in the national establishment, to unite her evangelical clergy, and make her, if possible, the instrument of diffusing

the blessings of a living Christianity over the land ; while the *direct effects* of his labours, and those of his *artisan* preachers, was, they avowed, to create schism in the church, and ultimately lead to a separation from it. The dissenters declared his conduct to be inexplicable ; for while he was keeping up a friendly correspondence with the ecclesiastical citadel, on the one hand, and that of dissent on the other, he was planting his columns in a central position, as if he only waited for a convenient opportunity for attacking and overthrowing both. The progress of time, however, has unveiled what seemed to be mysterious and contradictory in his character and proceedings, and exhibited this “man of God,” in a clearer light, before the British public.

The following testimony, from the pen of an able and an impartial witness of another denomination, may be adduced in proof of this. “John Wesley, considered simply as a man, was a rare, perhaps an unparalled specimen of human nature. Both in body and in mind, we think, he approached as nearly to perfection as any individual known to history. His creation, to no inconsiderable extent, determined the question how far all virtues, and all talents might be combined in the same person. He was capable, without a struggle, of having taken the first place in nearly all the highest walks of human

greatness, and all but the first, in the few that remained. By nature he was a poet, a logician, an orator, and a consummate man of business ; in philosophy and secular learning, he was a master ;— he was equally adapted to shine on the exchange, on the judgment-seat, in the senate-house, and at the helm of state. In his person too, a full experiment was made, with respect to the possible extent and duration of the use of this wondrous combination of powers, faculties, gifts, and graces. They were exercised with a continuity, and exerted with an intensity, to which the history of human nature supplies no parallel, and through a period which comprehends the whole span of two generations. The annals of the church, in modern times, present no such man ; the history of the reformed religion exhibits no such labours. Does the wonder then end with the individual? No: he was not only himself a wonder, but, under God, the author of wonders which are not likely soon to know either limit or end. In the person of this marvellous man, a further experiment was made, as if in order to determine how far an individual may be rendered the instrument of giving a moral and religious impulse to the human race. In the days of his flesh, he served God with a devotion and a consecration to which there have been few parallels ; and now the

history of the church, in his case, illustrates the scriptures, 'Them that honour me I will honour.'"

While conversing one evening, after supper, with the late Rev. Dr. Adam Clarke, respecting the literary attainments, unwearied industry, extensive usefulness, and private habits of Mr. Wesley, the writer of this narrative made some remarks on the principles of conduct laid down in his twelve rules of a helper, and inquired whether, in his intercourse with society, Mr. Wesley himself exemplified the practicability of these rules. The Dr. replied, "yes: *He* was always 'diligent,' I never found him 'unemployed.' I never knew him to be 'triflingly' employed. His own practice was formed upon these principles; and, if the preachers of his day, had not 'walked by the same rule, and minded the same things,' he would have sent them home,—'one to his farm and another to his merchandise.' Looking at his fine powers of mind, his scholarship, his profound acquaintance with the deep things of God, and, above all, the honour which his divine Master put upon him as a minister of the Gospel—for in the church there never was one above him, but Christ its head; I am of opinion, that God never made his fellow, and never will!" It may be allowed, that this estimate of character was dictated by a long, intimate, and endearing friendship; but,

by those who knew the Doctor, it will be regarded as a valuable testimony to the distinguished excellence of the founder of the Wesleyan societies. These eminent men have "entered into the joy of their Lord," and

"The eternal substance of their greatness
We leave with them."

The political horizon had been stormy during the whole of this year. A difference of sentiment, on the character of the French Revolution, gave rise to heated and violent discussions in parliament. But this cause of discord was not confined to the higher orders of society; it penetrated the inferior classes; and considerable pains were taken, by several journalists, to inflame the passions of the populous on the subject of, what was called, "Gallic Liberty." "The friends of freedom," in this country, rejoiced in the emancipation of a neighbouring nation, and flattered themselves that they saw, in the success of the revolution in France, not only the annihilation of despotism in that country, but the commencement of a new system of politics in Europe, the basis of which was peace, happiness, and mutual concord. In most of the larger towns of Great Britain, associations were formed for the celebration

of the French Revolution, on the 14th of July. The country was inundated with inflammatory and seditious publications. Amongst others, the town of Birmingham was disgraced by a series of tumults and outrages, which, for the space of four days, spread terror through that populous town and the adjacent country. The mob baffled all attempts to disperse them, and continued for three days, burning houses and destroying other valuable property to a large amount. The arrival of an additional military force, restored tranquillity. The ring-leaders were tried, committed, and executed. The history of Methodism, during this season of national excitement and destruction, may be given in the lines of Wesley,—

“ Like Moses’ bush it mounted higher,
And flourished unconsumed in fire.”

CHAPTER VI.

The Wesleyan ministry—Advantages and disadvantages of a resident or an itinerant ministry—The severe duties of the itinerancy—The true source of ministerial influence—Mr. Lowe appointed to Macclesfield circuit—Sketch of the character of the Rev. David Simpson, M. A., of Christ's church—Methodism and the Church in alliance—their separation—Anecdotes of Mr. Lowe, T. Allen, Esq., and Edward Clayton—Persecution of the Methodists at Shrigly—Twenty houses, tenanted by the Methodists, pulled down by Edward Downes, Esq.—Remarkable effusion of divine influence upon the neighbourhood—Observations on the state of religious parties—the progress of Christianity retarded by the democracy and infidelity of the times—Conversion and death of Mr. Lowe's brother Robert—Death of Mr. Henry Normanwood—his epitaph—Religious state of the Macclesfield circuit—Last service conducted by Mr. Lowe at Mobberly—A death-bed scene.

THE periodical changes to which the Wesleyan ministers have always been subject, and which constitute a prime element in their economy, were, at this time, of almost annual occurrence. The inherent power of that system must be great indeed,

which forms some hundreds of men in the same mould, makes them emphatically "one," places them in their respective orbits, to shed their diversified lights upon a benighted world, and regulates all their movements, by a few simple disciplinary laws. Their ordination puts them upon a level, and gives to each the same *status* in the Church; yet there exists a comprehensive and well-balanced scale of office and authority, ascending from "the least even unto the greatest." Those who are suddenly raised to prominence by adventitious circumstances, usually gravitate towards their own proper centre; while such as are distinguished by solid and useful attainments, are sure to be advanced to a permanent state of honour and influence in the body.

Much has been said and written on the advantages and disadvantages of a resident and an itinerant ministry: the former has been represented as being the best calculated to bring the "whole truth" in regular order before the people, to secure the steady, though slow growth of an enlightened piety, and to maintain the uniform exercise of discipline; the latter, as presenting partial views of truth, as fostering a superficial and noisy religion, and tolerating a disorderly state of Christian society. "By their fruits ye may know them." Let their respective merits be determined

by this criterion, and the Wesleyans will have no reason to complain of the result. It will be admitted, we presume, that the means and opportunities of the itinerant, for carrying out the original purposes of the Christian ministry, are much superior to those of the resident pastor; while, in all that conduces to personal comfort and social enjoyment, the latter is justly entitled to the pre-eminence. The resident pastor, it is said, is the centre where all the interests of the community unite; the focus from whence light and instruction diverge to its widest circumference. Like the heart, he communicates and sustains the living principle in every part of the system; and like the head, the throne of nervous supremacy, transmits the power of action to every member of the body. But, alas! how often is the ecclesiastical "head sick," and "the heart faint," so that the whole body becomes paralysed, and languishes in utter helplessness. The itinerancy, on the other hand, has a direct tendency, by the constant change of situation and circumstances, to promote the spiritual health of the ministerial labourer, and prevent lukewarmness from coming upon the church. The parochial and dissenting resident are, in many instances, like a beautiful spring, enclosed in marble architecture, and yielding a rich and copious supply to all who make a personal applica

tion ; but the Wesleyan itinerancy is like a majestic river, which sends its branches into all the provinces of a country, and puts its waters within the reach of "every creature." The resident pastor is his own architect, and shapes his church to his own taste, drawing to its communion such persons as are likely to serve its interests, and afford to himself an agreeable and profitable fellowship. In the course of years, he becomes the object of much and deserved respect. Many of the members of his flock he baptized in infancy, watched over in youth, and added to the church. He is endeared to them by the recollection, that it was he who administered consolation to their deceased parents in life, and commended their departing spirits into the hands of God at death. But there is undeniable evidence, that this very state of social harmony frequently degenerates into mutual complacency, and produces nothing but mutual congratulations.

To the itinerant has been assigned a less dignified position ; instead of being his own architect and working out his own plans, he enters upon the "labours of other men," and must be contented to share the honour of the undertaking with those who laid the foundation of the house, and raised it to its present elevation. But if his "taskmasters" demand his "tale of bricks," and require him to work them

into the building, under their direction, they supply the materials, and he has the satisfaction of seeing the edifice "growing into an holy temple in the Lord." The resident pastor can preside daily at the domestic altar, and take the direction of the moral, intellectual, and religious training of his family; while the calls of official duty are of such frequent occurrence as to render it difficult, if not impossible, for the itinerant to discharge these important duties. Mr. Wesley, foreseeing this inconvenience, provided, and the benevolence of the societies continues to support, two institutions for the classical and commercial education of his preachers' sons. These educational establishments are highly respectable and well-conducted, and form a valuable substitute for parental superintendence.

Every revolving season draws more tightly the cords of mutual attachment between the resident pastor and his flock, binding him more firmly to a locality where his children are establishing themselves in various branches of trade. The itinerant, on the other hand, whose friendships, though hastily formed, are often intimate and lasting, is frequently and suddenly called to break away from his most valued friends, and the beloved scene of his labours, leaving, perhaps, behind him, some members of his family, to rest in peace till the resurrection of the

just. Who can describe the bitterness of the tear that falls from his eye, under these circumstances! Recollecting, however, the admonitory words of our Saviour, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me," he throws himself upon the hope of a re-union in heaven, wipes off the descending tear, and resumes his sacred duties: and, though these duties involve a continued course of self-denial and self-sacrifice, yet he is willing, for Christ's sake, to "become all things to all men," and, in a scriptural sense, to be "the servant of all;" to exercise the utmost forbearance towards those "that oppose themselves," that obstruct the due administration of discipline, and resist his pastoral authority. Without entering into the subject controversially, we may just remark, that if the ability of the itinerancy could be infused into a resident ministry, and the pastoral opportunities of a resident ministry could be interwoven with the itinerancy, both would be considerably improved. But these objects cannot be combined without a great change in the organization of both.

If the principles of Wesleyanism are ever to pervade the masses of this country, they must be

effectually strengthened. The larger circuits and societies must be broken into smaller sections, and the number of diligent and faithful pastors speedily and greatly multiplied. The superintendents must, if possible, be relieved from many of their merely secular duties; and the ministers generally be required to devote a portion of their time to the inspection and supervision of the numerous schools, that are springing up in the various parts of the kingdom. At present, this is impracticable; for it is an admitted fact, that the Wesleyan itinerancy, makes larger demands upon the time and energies of man, than almost any other profession. When a candidate presents himself for admission into this ministry, he voluntarily places himself under the control of the Conference; and formally recognises the right of his brethren, to select the stations he is to occupy in successive years, and to direct his labours. The senior minister of the circuit to which he may be appointed, is made his guardian and invested with a jurisdiction which extends to his moral and religious character, his private habits and studies, the nature of his intercourse with the people of his charge, the quality of the doctrine he preaches, and his efficiency as a "pastor and teacher." And, while his temporal wants are supplied, he is expected and required to be "instant in season and out of

season ;” preaching the word, visiting the sick, and instructing the young ; bestowing, at the same time, a vigilant oversight on all religious, charitable, and connexional institutions in his circuit. The minister who discharges these duties with seriousness, punctuality, and devotion, will seldom fail to secure the confidence of his brethren, and the affections of the Wesleyan societies. They will “ esteem him highly in love for his *works’ sake.*”

This was the true source of that respect which such men as the late Rev. George Lowe, every where commanded, and of that influence they so beneficially exercised over others. They advanced no claim to eloquence or superior learning, they were not ambitious of distinction, they did not “ *affect the gentleman.*” They were men of one book, of one aim, and of one business. The share of popular favour they enjoyed amongst their own people, was simply an acknowledgment of their integrity of character. They betrayed no trust, they neither neglected nor shunned any duty ; while they afforded to the living and the dying, abundant proof, that their “ Methodism was nothing but Christianity in earnest ! ” It appears to us doubtful, whether the annals of the church furnish any more striking exemplifications of the power of experimental and practical Christianity, than were exhibited in some of

the venerable men called into the Lord's vineyard, by Mr. Wesley. They displayed almost every shade of intellectual and ministerial character. Amongst them, were poets of exquisite taste and genius; orators, who moved thousands to tears, and reclaimed them from profligacy; scholars, well acquainted with several useful branches of learning and philosophy; able ministers of the New Testament, who multiplied, governed, and "fed the flock" of Christ; and men of fortune, who "gave their own selves to the Lord," and their "goods to feed the poor." All these men "walked by the same rule, and minded the same things." Who can calmly contemplate their labours, their sufferings, their triumphs, and their deaths, without being led to suppose that the apostolic age was again returning to the church.

"O what an age of golden days!
O what a choice peculiar race!"

* . * * *

"Where shall I wander now to find
The successors they left behind?"

In 1792, the subject of these memorials was appointed to the Macclesfield circuit. This appointment was agreeable to the preacher and highly

satisfactory to the people. The Rev. David Simpson, "a burning and shining light," was then in the zenith of his glory. He had for some time occupied Christ's church, a large and elegant structure ; purposely erected and endowed for him, by his patron and friend, Charles Roe, Esq., and at his sole expense. The church was generally crowded with a serious and attentive audience, to whom, under God, he was made uncommonly useful. When the weather was in any degree favourable, numbers attended to hear him from the adjacent country, frequently from the distance of six, eight, or ten miles ; and that not merely on extraordinary occasions, but during the entire period of his ministry. For many years he frequently visited the neighbouring villages, and where the churches were closed against him, he delivered the gospel message in private houses or in the open air. On these occasions, his sermons were remarkably plain, pointed, short, and powerful. Hundreds were awakened, and began to enquire the way to Zion ; while the dormant principles of religion, throughout the country, received a new and mighty impulse from his pulpit ministrations. As Methodism spread, he gradually abridged his labours. Conversing one day with a friend, he observed, "my health will no longer allow me to follow my former plan, nor is it now necessary,

as the Wesleyan preachers are received in all these villages, and have formed societies." But though his attachment to Mr. Wesley and Methodism was strong and uninterrupted, he was perfectly free from the spirit of bigotry. Few ever excelled him in liberality and catholicity of sentiment. His house and heart were generally open to the Methodists, Independents, and Baptists, as well as to the clergymen and members of the Church of England. "I have never met with any one," said a gentleman that knew him well, "in whom candour and impartiality were more conspicuous; he would readily allow to all, every thing which could possibly be advanced in favour of their tenets, or modes of worship, and, unless truth and conscience were involved, cheerfully gave them the right-hand of fellowship. Whatever related to the present and eternal happiness of man; or tended to the amelioration of his condition; or contributed, in any degree, to his temporal prosperity or spiritual welfare; were the objects to which he devoted his time, his talents, his money, and his influence. He was the oracle, the friend, the physician, and the benefactor of the poor; many times did he cause the widow's heart to sing for joy, and the tears to be dried up from the eyes of the fatherless.

“ Like the northern Aurora,
He shone in all directions.”

In company, he was the Christian and the gentleman; in the study, the man of application and literature; but in the pulpit, he shone with the greatest lustre. “ I have often,” said the gentleman already referred to, “ admired him there. His person was pleasing and commanding: his eye uncommonly bright and piercing: when he appeared as an ambassador of Christ, a sacred awe generally rested upon the congregation: they felt the force of the poet’s beautiful delineation of the Christian minister:

‘ There stands the messenger of truth, there stands
The legate of the skies! his theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear.
By him the violated law speaks out
Its thunders: and by him, in strains as sweet
As angels use, the gospel whispers peace.
He stablishes the strong, restores the weak,
Reclaims the wanderer, binds the broken heart,
And arm’d himself in panoply complete
Of heavenly temper, furnishes with arms
Bright as his own, and trains, by every rule
Of holy discipline, to glorious war,
The sacramental host of God’s elect.’”

When riding into the country with Mr. M——, about three months before his death, he said, “ I

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have never withheld any truth of God, either from fear, or with a desire to obtain the favour of any man.

‘Bold in my Master’s cause,
I earth and hell defied.’”

As he respected all whom he thought to be sincere in their profession, so he was beloved by all denominations of Christians. So general was this respect, and so prevalent the solicitude for his recovery, that, during his last sickness, public prayers were offered up on his behalf, in the various places of worship in the town, and even in the church, from which he had been driven by the violence of party spirit. During his affliction, the patience, resignation, faith, and triumph of the Christian were illustriously displayed. A few days before he died, he said, “Tell the people that their pastor is not dying in the dark! No, blessed be God! I have a glorious hope, blooming, and full of immortality. ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth.’ He is precious to my soul: I feel his divine consolations. I wish I were able to utter all I feel. All is well! all shall be well!” About three thousand people attended his funeral, and even little children followed him to the grave weeping. The scene was deeply affecting, and the sentiment of the poet seemed to actuate every spectator—

“He was a man, take him for all in all,
We ne’er shall look upon his like again.”

Methodism had long acted, in Macclesfield, in intimate alliance with the Church. The Wesleyans attended the church in the forenoon, and the clergyman and his congregation attended the Wesleyan chapel in the afternoon of the Lord's day. The clergyman evinced a lively interest in everything that affected the honour, or tended to retard the progress, of Methodism. He counselled and encouraged the preachers, attended the lovefeasts, visited the people, and rejoiced in their prosperity. The Wesleyans strengthened the hands of the clergyman, and contributed, liberally, and from year to year, to assist him in establishing and supporting several useful institutions in connection with the Church. The church was usually filled to overflowing, and numbered many hundreds at her communion table. Conversions were of frequent occurrence. The Wesleyans formed a compact body, and had above twelve hundred members of society in the circuit. Here, then, is an example of two great bodies, each preserving its own distinctive character, and yet blending in social worship, alternately at church and chapel, and co-operating to raise the tone of public morals, and to elevate the standard of Christian experience in their respective communities. It was a singular coincidence, that the magistrates, at this time, were men that feared God, and exercised their

judicial authority for the suppression of every form of vice. Impressed with the responsibilities of their office as legal guardians of the peace and morals of the public, they put down all Sunday trading and travelling, punished the drunken and disorderly, enforced the observance of the Lord's day, and set an example of consistency themselves. "They were a terror to evil-doers, and the praise of them that did well." How beautifully applicable are the words of Scripture to this state of things; "Then had the churches rest; and, walking in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." There was, at this period, a constant stream of converts flowing into the Church of Christ, and almost every death-bed afforded evidence of the mighty work which God was carrying on in the town and neighbourhood.

But "There arose another king over" the Church, "which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold, the children of Israel are more and mightier than we; come on, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew." The Methodists were divorced, and the Church, confiding in her own strength and numbers,

assumed a haughty and repulsive attitude. The separation, which was painful to many of the Wesleyans, was fatal to the spiritual interests of the Church. The members of that communion, withdrawing from the religious services of the Methodists, and having no adequate means amongst themselves for strengthening their religious principles, soon fell into mere formalism. And, although the Church in Macclesfield has been much improved of late years, yet, it has not attained to that state of godly zeal, union, and prosperity, in which Simpson left it.

In the meantime, Methodism, "like a tree planted by the rivers of waters," has maintained its freshness, "yielding," from year to year, "the peaceable fruits of righteousness;" and few societies in the Wesleyan connexion, at this time, excel those of the Macclesfield circuit, in piety, intelligence, wealth, and liberality. This may be attributed, in a great degree, to the personal influence and princely munificence of Thomas Allen, Esq., who, for more than half a century, has evinced an inviolable attachment to his own people, and yet has extended his benevolence to the useful institutions of all denominations. As a Christian, a magistrate, and a philanthropist, his name will be respected by successive generations. This gentleman, whose house, heart, and hand, were always open to the people of God, and especially to

the ministers of the Gospel, received Mr. Lowe into the circuit with much cordiality, and gave him all the encouragement and assistance in his power.

The preachers were "perfectly joined together, in the same mind and in the same judgment." They paid a strict regard to their pulpit and pastoral duties, put the circuit upon a new system of finance, secured the more punctual attendance of the people at the commencement of public worship, and everywhere remodeled and improved the choirs. Wherever Mr. Lowe came, he reformed the congregational singing. Having acquired a competent knowledge of the science of music in early life, and possessing a soft, copious, and commanding voice, he frequently conducted this part of divine worship himself. While thus employed at a band meeting one night, he raised a favourite tune, the bass of which was very difficult, and could be sung to his satisfaction by only one individual present on that occasion. His name was Edward Clayton. He was much deformed, and very diminutive in size, but his voice combined the rare qualities of sweetness, fulness, and depth of tone. As they approached the most difficult part of the tune, Mr. Lowe exclaimed, "Now, Ned, mind that low note." Ned felt the compliment, threw his head upon his shoulder, and, with equal complacency and power, brought out the

“low note,” to the high gratification of the attentive and discriminating ear of Mr. Lowe. This “ruling passion” was strong, in Mr. Lowe, to the last. When near ninety years of age, the writer of these pages heard him sing “Jacob’s well,” with his friend T. Allen, Esq., with a precision, pathos, and effect, which would not have disgraced the choir of a cathedral. These veterans had often mingled their voices with those of Wesley and his early co-adjutors, whom death has long since swept from the earth. They, and a few others, were spared, like the main timbers of some mighty shipwreck, to show, to the present generation, the strength and excellence of the original structure.

For several years, the Methodists had established a regular Sunday service, and formed a class, in the village of Shrigley, about five miles from Macclesfield, the property of Edward Downs, Esq., of Shrigley Hall. Just at this time the old gentleman died, and was succeeded by his son. The young squire did not like the Methodists, and set about “rooting this superstition and enthusiasm,” as he called it, out of the township. He prohibited the “false prophets” from coming to Shrigley, and the people from entertaining them, or assembling to hear them. This not succeeding, he next cited them to appear before the magistrates, and desired the magis-

trates to interdict their meeting in future. No breach of the peace being proved against them, they were dismissed. These efforts proving abortive, he had recourse to another expedient. One Sunday evening in September, while they were assembled in a little room which one of the friends had built, the squire presented himself at the door, and ordered them to disperse immediately. They were intensely engaged in prayer at the time, and took no notice of his mandate. When they arose from their knees, one said, "Don't be frightened, set out a verse of a hymn and let us sing a bit." Peter Beard was giving out a verse when the squire, who had been "nursing his wrath to keep it warm," sprang forward and seized him by the throat. He then sent for the constables and a large mastiff dog, which he kept at the hall. Being impatient to get the Methodists dislodged, he ordered the messenger to mount his pony and "ride with all his might." When the constables and dog arrived, he took the ferocious animal and clapping his hands and hissing, sent him among the men, women, and children assembled. After plunging into the room, and making a dreadful noise, as if he were worrying the people, he seized Mary Rylands by the arm. Without inflicting the slightest wound he instantly quitted his hold, and, springing out at the door, all the art

of the squire could not induce him to return to the attack. The Methodists said little, but they kept possession of the room; and the squire, his dog, and the constables, were obliged to retire. His resentment fell immediately upon the person whose house they occupied, and he soon found the means by which to turn him out of the township. He then commenced operations, and nearly the whole village being his own property, he pulled down twenty houses tenanted by the Methodists. Mr. Clulow, solicitor, of Macclesfield, brother to the gentleman of that name who signed Mr. Wesley's last will, hearing of the extraordinary proceedings of the squire, negotiated with the proprietor of a small freehold building, which stood in a field a short distance from the squire's mansion, and succeeded in renting it. The squire could scarcely restrain his indignation, on hearing that the Methodists had "set up their banner," in this building. But while, in a paroxysm of rage, he was uttering the most alarming threatenings against them, he received a letter from the attorney, Mr. Clulow, advising him to proceed with caution, as the little house in the field had been duly licensed and placed under the protection of the law. The squire retired from the contest, vexed and irritated, and appeared from that day dejected and unhappy. The tide of fortune turned

against him ; and, after some time, he sickened and died ; and his beautiful mansion and estate passed into the hands of strangers.

In the mean time, a sense of security put new life into the Methodists. They spread themselves in every direction ; invited the people to come to their meetings, to hear the word of God expounded, and to unite with them in prayer. The most diffident amongst them became heroes and evangelists, and the “hand of the Lord was made bare” in their assemblies. The most hardened villains in the neighbourhood trembled under the apprehension of God’s vengeance, and renounced their sins. In a few weeks, upwards of forty individuals, and some of them the most depraved characters in the village, were converted and added to the little society. And what were these but the scenes of Pentecost upon a smaller scale ? “In the progress of our experience, relating to such seasons of awakening, we have seen,” says a modern writer, “circumstances which furnished overwhelming evidence of God’s special presence. We have stood in awe of his majesty, in view of the general solemnity that reigned around us : a solemnity produced by no visible cause, other than the ordinary means of grace. We *have seen* the tide of gaiety and folly at once arrested, the loftiest look brought low, and the stoutest heart

melted in penitence. We *have seen* the man of morals, entrenched for more than half a century within his refuge of lies, and dreaming of no danger, suddenly waked from his delusion, and, fearfully alarmed at the insecurity of his hiding-place, finding no rest, day nor night, till in the ark of safety. We *have seen* the slave of appetite and lust raised up from the debasement of a ruined fortune and character, and rescued from the very *gate of hell* ! We have seen him, afterwards, shining in the beauty of holiness, regaining the full confidence of the community, and elevating his hopes and affections to the throne of God. And where we have witnessed facts like these, and have been aware of no other visible cause, than a plain but calm exhibition of evangelical truth, we have instinctively exclaimed, — ‘The work, O Lord, is thine : and it is marvellous in our eyes.’ ” Ours is an age of religious revival. Each passing year gives to it this character in more distinctive features. And doubtless, as the period of Zion’s universal triumph comes on, these showers of God’s grace will exhibit still greater majesty and power. The victories of the Spirit will become more and more extended, as well as illustrious. All Christendom is yet to be overshadowed by one vast cloud of divine influence. Lands, doomed for generations to a state of moral darkness and death, shall

be watered and made fruitful, '*like the garden of God.*' And in the holy city itself, '*now trodden down of the Gentiles,*' shall be repeated those displays of power and grace which attended the first preaching of the cross. But what solution can be given to the melancholy fact, that, with such a host of enlightened and able preachers, and such an amount of labour performed by them, and such a variety of means in incessant operation, for diffusing the truths of the gospel, the work of conversion should proceed so slowly? Never were ministers so multiplied, never were they supported by such bands of intelligent auxiliaries, and never, on the whole, was evangelical truth so freely uttered or so widely spread among the myriads of our congregations: but when we ask for the result—what inroads have been made on the world, what conquests have enlarged and strengthened the Church, the answer is painfully disappointing." In some places, the number of the faithful is on the decline; in others, they are stationary; elsewhere, they are reinforced but slowly; and scarcely anywhere with the rapidity which might have been anticipated: while the population is augmenting at a fearful ratio. It is true, that the accumulation of wealth, the growth of luxury, the fluctuations in trade and commerce, the consequent changes from comfort to want in the condition of the working

classes, the difficulty of finding room for the crowds ever pressing into every walk of human business and emolument, and the temptation which competition every where gives to overstraining of invention and industry ; — these, not to mention our political strifes, tend to produce a state of mind unfriendly to the spirituality and self-denial of the gospel. But over what evils, as formidable at least as these, has not the gospel already triumphed? Nothing is ever to be allowed to engender the disheartening suspicion that a crisis has arisen to which the resources of mercy and power in the gospel, and its right administration, are inadequate. Ignorance is to be put to flight by a more forcible and reiterated declaration of divine truth ; apathy is to be kindled into sensibility by a more earnest and ardent zeal ; worldliness is to disappear in the presence of a higher spirituality ; selfishness is to melt away before a more commanding disinterestedness ; the love of ease is to be made to blush by the sight of a readiness to do and suffer to the utmost limit of human sacrifice and endurance ; a weak and hesitating faith is to be nurtured to strength and courage by a confidence in God which trusts him to the extent of his truth and power. When we survey the ministry in the several sections of the church, there are some symptoms of moral weakness which cannot but

awaken just anxiety for its highest interests and honour.

With respect to the Church of England, there is little hope, at present, of its genuine renovation from either Puseyism or cold orthodoxy. The evangelical clergy are the only men, under God, to whom we can look for such a work. But not only are they few, compared with the host who hold a different creed, but there are considerations which tend to repress any ardent expectations from them. "Among the dissenting bodies," says one of their own writers, "notice is due to the Independents, as the most numerous. Considering the general order of talent and mental culture in the ministers of that body, their intelligence and popular gifts, their uniform maintenance of evangelical truth, together with that free spirit of enquiry and observation which disposes them to look beyond their own denomination, and to receive light from any quarter, what might not be expected for the revival of religion, throughout the widest circle of their influence, were their piety, certainly not inferior to that of any other body, to undergo the renovation which the times require, and to bring all their resources into the fullest and most energetic action. But there are some things in them that justify remark. They do not sufficiently bring their strength to bear on the humblest classes.

They are not without zeal and laboriousness; but what they do must be in a genteel way. Of the numerous students annually sent out from their colleges, we hear of none who are candidates for the self-denying and toilsome, but ill remunerated, labours of the home mission field. Turning to the Wesleyan body," says the same writer, "and contemplating its rise and astonishing progress, the unanimity of its counsels, and the success vouchsafed to its unremitting and devoted labours, who cannot but regard it as one of the richest dispensations of mercy to our country and to the world, and feel how largely the interests of religion are comprised in its continued prosperity. A revival, however, of the simple and self-denying piety which animated its first evangelists, would give a new spring and energy to its movements, and shed new light and freshness on all its ministrations."

A ministry may have unquestionable piety, but not so strong and active as to inflame the soul, and keep it in an elevated region of spirituality. It may have the spirit of prayer, but its highest fervours may be in the public assembly; while in private it languishes and is incapable of any prolonged effort. It may have faith; but, instead of that which, entering into the divine counsels, and resting on the divine promise, attempts great things, and is confident

of the issue, it may be great neither in expectation nor in deed. It may not count much on the world's praise, and yet might not be able to bear its derision and reproach. It may not be sordid, and yet it may fail to impress every observer with the conviction of its lofty disinterestedness and utter oblivion of self. It may be diligent, and yet come short of the unceasing and strenuous exertion which makes every moment tributary to the great end for which it was given. It may omit no duty, whether of popular instruction or of private visitation; and yet it may be wanting in the unction which makes every act duly gainful. It may be thoughtful and inventive for schemes of usefulness, and yet want the hidden fire, the deep-seated and restless anxiety, which would task it to the utmost and draw forth all its resources. Let the general character of the ministry of the present day be improved, and it will soon draw the Church many degrees nearer the strength and glory of the millennial age. The comparative tameness and powerlessness of the modern ministry would have been but ill adapted to the exigencies of the times of which we are now writing. The British nation, being intoxicated with the plausible theories and levelling principles of the French philosophers, "rolled to and fro like a drunken man," and was

only saved from perishing in political convulsions, by the merciful interposition of Divine Providence.

In October, this year, a "National Convention," as it was called, was formed in Edinburgh. It was composed of delegates from other societies of the description in different parts of England and Ireland. They adopted all the forms, names, and proceedings of the French Jacobin clubs, with such difference and omissions only as their peculiar circumstances rendered necessary. They divided themselves into sections, appointed committees of organization, of instruction, of finance, of secrecy, and of emergency, and dated their proceedings in "the first year of the British Convention, one and indivisible." The Government became acquainted with their movements and objects; the ring-leaders were apprehended, tried, and transported. The state trials heightened the alarm which universally prevailed. On the twelfth of May, a message was delivered from the king to the two houses of parliament, referring to the seditious practices of these democratic societies, and intimating the necessity of taking measures for defeating their dangerous designs. These societies, it was stated, "under the pretence of reform, aimed at the subversion of the government; that other associations, in different parts of the kingdom, pursued the same object; that they

had endeavoured to promote a general convention of the people; that they had provided themselves with arms for the more effectual prosecution of their nefarious purposes; that their proceedings were regulated on the French model; and, that they were using every exertion to supersede the authority of parliament."

This state of popular excitement was heightened, rather than moderated, by the publication of Burke's celebrated work on the French Revolution. The work was written with great force and eloquence. The object of this elaborate treatise was two-fold:—first, to expose to the public indignation the principles and conduct of those persons who had, in this country, manifested their approbation of the continental democrats; and, second, to place the Revolution itself in a just light, as "an event to be deplored, detested, and deprecated." This production gave rise to numberless replies, of which the most memorable was that written by Thomas Paine, the author of the pamphlet styled "Common sense," which, by its effects on the minds of the people of America, prepared the way for the declaration of independency. These works, unfortunately appearing at a time when a large portion of the community were, from various causes, in a state of great irritation and discontent, and the books being written in a style and manner

which brought their principles "home to every man's bosom," innumerable converts were made to their general system; and such were the pains taken to circulate them amongst the body of the people, that fifty thousand copies were sold in a very short time. Political associations multiplied in every part of the kingdom; and what made these factions particularly dangerous to the state, was, their known connection with the confederated robbers and assassins of France. "The question," said Burke, in the House of Commons, "is not whether we should address the throne, but whether we should have a throne at all!"

Perhaps at no former period, since the Reformation, was the authority of God's word less regarded in this country, or the power of its principles more severely tried. But, like the bush of Moses, it continued "unconsumed in fire!" Christianity had been abjured abroad, and the signs of the times indicated the near approach of a democratic earthquake likely to shake, if not ingulph, the whole fabric of religion in Great Britain. Statesmen quaked in the anticipation of coming events, and the infatuated multitudes were so generally engrossed by their various revolutionary schemes, that the public sanctuaries were neglected, and the aggressions of vital godliness generally suspended. The national faith,

however, resembled the solitary plant that springs from a single particle of grain, that retains its freshness and vitality during the severities of winter, maintaining its position in defiance of the conflicting elements, and then spreading and ramifying its roots in the spring, and sending forth numerous offshoots, which yield "an hundred fold" in autumn. After the spirit of democracy had reluctantly succumbed to the sovereignty of the laws, and the popular delusions by which the people had been misled were dispelled, by the evidence of facts and the test of experience; the country recovered from its delirium; the ordinances of religion were better attended; the Christian faith expanded and spread its own fruits of "virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity," over the land.

In January of this year, Mr. Lowe's brother, Robert, died, after a severe and protracted illness. The circumstances attending this event, were detailed with much feeling, by Mr. George, in a letter to a friend. "The following account of the conversion and death of my brother," says he, "as it affords me the greatest consolation, so I hope it may be useful to others, and induce them to persevere in fervent supplication, for those of their relations who are far from God, and utter strangers to the life and

power of religion. My brother Robert was born in the year 1763 ; from his infancy he was of a modest, retiring disposition, and, yet, of such an ingenious turn, that he readily acquired whatever he set himself about to learn. But, I regret to say, that the greatest part of his days were spent in a state of alienation from God. By the restraining power of divine grace, however, he was happily preserved from the grosser vices which predominate in this age of impiety and dissipation : yet his views and pursuits were “ according to the course of this world,” till the rod of affliction was laid heavy upon him. And even then, it was with reluctance that he owned the hand of God, and yielded to the admonitions and convictions of the Spirit of Truth. In the 24th year of his age, his health began to decline ; the first symptom of which was a pain in his left side, occasioned, I believe, by singing long and loud at an oratorio. He lived five years after this, but his strength gradually consumed away “ like a moth fretting a garment.” This continued illness restrained him from associating with his former companions ; and musical entertainments lost their infatuating influence over his mind. He applied himself diligently to reading ; and began to attend, with seriousness and frequency, the preaching of God’s word. By these means he gained some

knowledge of his fallen state, and, at times, was much affected, particularly under the ministry of Mr. Shadford; nevertheless, he was not fully awakened to a sense of his danger. I had often spoken to him in the plainest terms on the precarious state of his health, and the necessity of preparing for death; but he would make little or no reply; still entertaining the deceitful hope of ultimate recovery. The near approach of eternity, however, opened his eyes; he was thoroughly alarmed, and began to cry ‘mightily to God’ for mercy. I was from home when I received the following account from a Christian friend respecting him:—‘On the 13th of January, your brother grew much worse, and seemed conscious that he would soon be in the grave. The burden of his sins, and the trouble of his mind on account of them, were almost insupportable. I called to see him on the Wednesday after, when, in conversation, he said,—‘my distress is like Francis Spira’s, but I do not *despair* of obtaining mercy!’ At night I visited him again, accompanied by several religious friends. He spoke freely to us: the spirit of prayer rested upon him: he was full of expectation, but had no consciousness of pardon. I encouraged him to look up to the Lord in faith for that blessing, and it would certainly be given him. We then engaged in

prayer; and while we were calling upon God, He graciously answered us from his holy place. Your brother was set at perfect liberty: all his darkness and misery were, in an instant, removed, and his soul rejoiced in the God of his salvation. Our prayers were turned into praise. I was humbled in the very dust before the Lord, and felt such a sense of the divine presence as I cannot express.' Soon after I received, from the same person, the following particulars:—'I was with your brother constantly some days before he died. He was enabled to hold fast his confidence in the Lord, though Satan assaulted him, at times, with various temptations, till Thursday, when the Lord spoke a second time to his soul, and filled him with that love which is stronger than death. He believed that the tempter would not be permitted to assault him any more. He told us that he had glorious discoveries of the Trinity; and often cried out, 'Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.' He was so exceedingly happy in his mind, that the dying body partook of the influences thereof, insomuch that he was even afraid of mending again. Shortness of breath had prevented him from lying down in bed for four nights; but as he now felt no pain, he desired to be laid down a little, and was refreshed. His peace and joy in the Lord

continued, though he could speak but few words. When we mentioned the preciousness of Christ to the dying believer, he lifted his hand and smiled with ineffable sweetness. I was with him all the day ; and ‘ truly our fellowship was with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.’ He expressed a wish to see Mr. Shadford, that they might praise God together. About nine o’clock in the evening, he desired us to go to prayer, and, soon after, cried out ‘ Oh ! I feel a pain at my heart ! I am going ! My eyesight is gone ! Brighter and brighter ! ’ We again knelt down ; and while we were commending his soul to the divine mercy, he gently fell asleep in Jesus.” Permit me to add, that I have reason to believe that my brother’s conversion was brought about in answer to the prayers of many pious friends ; and particularly those of his mother, who had known the Lord for forty years. I remember, that, when stationed in the Blackburn circuit, I told the people at a lovefeast, that my brother was in danger of losing his soul, and entreated them to unite with me in prayer for him. They did so ; and I am fully persuaded that God saw our tears and heard our supplications in his behalf on that day. I desire to double my diligence ; and devoutly wish, that every one who reads these lines may be induced

to 'pray without ceasing, and in everything to give thanks.' ”

Soon after this date, Mr. Henry Howard, of Normanwood, near Macclesfield, died triumphantly ; and at the request of his widow, who subsequently married the Rev. R. Crowther, Mr. Lowe prepared the following epitaph, which was put upon the stone that still marks the place of his interment. These lines were no doubt the most successful production of his muse. They were stereotyped in his memory ; and after repeating them he made the writer promise that they should neither be omitted nor altered in any thing that might be published after his decease :—

“ A conqueror, through faith, lies here :

He vanquished the world, and sin, and fear ;

Then, smiling, laid his armour down,

And seiz'd the never-fading crown ! ”

Throughout the entire circle of his labours, Mr. Lowe had abundant reason to rejoice in the growing prosperity of the societies over which he was placed. The class meetings and lovefeasts developed a depth of experience and tone of Christian feeling, which evinced greater unction in the means of grace, and increased diligence and faithfulness on the part of the people. The quarterly meetings afforded satis-

factory evidence that this revival of primitive Christianity was not partial, but extended to every part of the circuit. The ministers "saw the grace of God and were glad, and exhorted the people to cleave unto the Lord with full purpose of heart." Having "laid aside all malice and envies," these "servants of the Lord did not strive," but "each esteemed other better than themselves;" and as each had "gone forth bearing precious seed," they all "came again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them." "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! it is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments: as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

The last service that Mr. Lowe conducted in this circuit was at Mobberly, a beautiful village about three miles from Knutsford. The people came from many of the adjacent hamlets, and filled the preaching-house to overflowing. Some of them had brought their children with them, to take a final leave of a minister whom they had been accustomed to regard as an instructor and a personal friend. Several among them he had reproved in

health, visited in sickness, and relieved in seasons of indigence. The recollection of his ministerial faithfulness and pastoral diligence favourably disposed their minds to receive his last message. The preacher stood before them the subject of deep and conflicting emotions. His heart was full. He had taught them “publicly and from house to house ;” but although the work of God was in encouraging progress, yet comparatively few had received “the engrafted word, which is able to save the soul.” Horace says,—“Pity is the tenderest part of love ;” and Mr. Lowe’s soul yearned over those present

“Who had not yet their Saviour known.”

With his mind deeply impressed with the solemnity of the occasion, and the probable results of the sermon upon the final destiny of his hearers, he opened the service in a disturbed but subdued state of feeling. Here was a most favourable disposition of things: the people were waiting before God with seriousness and expectation ; and the preacher was resolved to “clear himself of the blood” of all of them. While he “expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Christ,” the Lord verified his own promise, and made “the word of his grace” like “a flame of fire.” The feeling

was intense and widely diffused ; so that a stranger approaching the chapel would have said like Joshua, "There is the voice of war in the camp." The reply of Moses, to the observation of his brother, is strikingly descriptive of the scene at Mobberly : "and he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome : but the voice of them that sing do I hear." All these voices were blended on this occasion ; but the voice of rejoicing predominated. The meeting was continued to a late hour ; and numbers were constrained to enter into a covenant, that night

"For God to live and die !"

Though much exhausted by the exercises in which he had been engaged, the preacher hastened away from the chapel to visit a man who was dying in the neighbourhood. The house of the afflicted man was filled with his neighbours before Mr. Lowe arrived. The notorious, avowed, and habitual profligacy of this man seemed to justify the prevalent conviction, that he was being "driven away in his wickedness." Mr. Lowe advanced to the bed-side, and asked him how he did. To which he replied, "I am very poorly. My legs are very much swol-

len, and both are in a state of mortification, but I hope to be better in a few days.” “Better!” said Mr. Lowe, “what are you dreaming about? If your legs are in a state of mortification there is no probability of your being better in this world! It does not appear to me that you can live beyond a few days; and, if you die without repentance, you must go to hell!” “I hope not, Sir,” said the man, “I have not been such a sinner as all that!” “If what I have heard be true,” rejoined Mr. Lowe, “you have been the ‘chief of sinners’ in this part of the country; and you know that the scriptures have declared, that the ‘wicked shall be turned into hell with all the nations that forget God.’ Your condition is awful; and what is to become of you I know not. Present appearances would lead me to conclude, that you will soon be with the devil and his angels.” Here he paused; and the wretched creature lay motionless for an instant or two. Mr. Lowe then resumed,—“I do not know, but God may, after all, have compassion upon you! Though your sins are great, and your case nearly hopeless, the Lord can, perhaps, save you! If you confess your transgressions with a penitent heart, he may possibly forgive you! He has said, ‘Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee.’ This address, delivered with great earnestness,

moved the hardened offender, who drew the sheet over his wrinkled countenance, to conceal his tears, and sobbed and cried bitterly to God for mercy. The issue of the conflict was not long doubtful. While they were engaged in prayer, the great Physician applied the "balm of Gilead," and made "the wounded whole." The man died soon after. What a source of encouragement is here opened to the Christian Pastor! Thus Mr. Lowe concluded, as he had commenced, his labours in this circuit,—in the true spirit of an evangelist.

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Lowe is appointed to Northwich—Revival at Knutsford and erection of the chapel—The peace of the circuit disturbed by the Calvinists—Doctor Clarke's opinion of modern Calvinism—The union of Christian churches—The Methodist Connexion greatly agitated on the subjects of Baptism and the Lord's Supper—The constitution of Methodism modified by the Conference—The effects of the French Revolution, and the writings of Mr. Thomas Paine, upon the political state of this country—Mr. Lowe removes to Nottingham—The state and prospects of religion in that town and neighbourhood—The societies divided by Mr. Alexander Kilham—His character—He demands organic changes, and is expelled by the Conference—The New Connexion formed and placed under the administration of lay trustees—Revival of religion in Nottingham—Remarkable occurrence at Ilkstone—Mr. Lowe visits Sheffield—Preaches for Mr. Bradburn—Mr. Kilham and his Conference attend the service—The effects produced—The old societies in Nottingham rapidly increase in numbers and unity—The political state of Great Britain—Invasion of Ireland by France—Dreadful loss of life and property in that country.

THE Conference of 1794 appointed Mr. Lowe to the superintendence of the Northwich circuit, with

James Watson and Miles Martindale for his colleagues. This circuit was, at that period, very wide; enclosing a considerable extent of country, interspersed with numerous towns and villages. The preachers had many places of worship to supply, many societies to regulate and instruct, and a good deal of obloquy and persecution to endure. A general langour and apathy pervaded the societies, and many of the congregations were small. On going round the circuit, Mr. Lowe perceived a prevalent inattention to order and discipline; a great want of punctuality in commencing and concluding the religious services on the Lord's day; and much remissness, on the part of some of the leaders, in the manner of conducting their class-meetings and discharging the spiritual and secular duties of their office. He was himself an example of exactness in every thing; and insisted, every where, upon a strict conformity to the rules of the connexion, on the part of both officers and members. He applied the pruning knife to the societies, and removed from the class-books the names of those who retained a nominal connexion with God's people, but contributed nothing towards either the temporal or spiritual prosperity of the church.

These proceedings created some prejudices, and provoked some opposition to his measures; but the

obvious purity of his motives, the integrity of his life, and the fervour of his zeal, soon removed all asperity of feeling, inspired confidence, and led the people generally to acquiesce in his plans. By a prudent, firm, and judicious superintendence on the part of Mr. Lowe, and a laborious discharge of their duties, on the part of his fellow-labourers, symptoms of returning life began to manifest themselves, even in those societies, which, like the fig-tree, had almost "withered away." This was especially the case at Knutsford, where there was a sudden and large accession of hearers on the Lord's day, and several instances of the sovereignty and omnipotence of divine grace in converting some of the most hopeless sinners in the town. Persons were cut to the heart under almost every sermon, "and so falling down on their faces they worshipped God, and reported that God was amongst" the Methodists "of a truth." In a few weeks, the new converts outnumbered the regular members of society.

Up to this time, they had held their meetings in a very inconvenient room, belonging to Peter Dean; but an increase of piety and numbers, produced a corresponding spirit of zeal and liberality, so that they resolved to have a separate and respectable place of worship of their own. The members contributed freely amongst themselves, and solicited the

aid of their friends in Knutsford: while Mr. Lowe went to Chester, and Mr. Martindale to Liverpool, to awaken the sympathy of the Methodists in those towns, and solicit their co-operation. They soon returned with the handsome sum of £53. 13s., which, being added to their own contributions, enabled them to proceed at once with the building. The erection of the chapel occasioned no small stir; and many a prayer was offered for the success of the undertaking.

But while every thing was presenting the most encouraging aspect, an incident occurred which threatened to frustrate their hopes and paralyze their efforts. As the kitchen of Peter Dean was large, it was considered a convenient place in which to prepare the doors and windows of the new chapel. One evening, after the carpenters had left off work, one of Peter's children entered the kitchen with a lighted candle, and there being a great quantity of loose shavings near the door, the place was instantly in flames. The interior of the house was destroyed, but, by great exertion, the walls, and, what was singular, the roof were saved. Some looked upon this catastrophe as an interposition of Providence to check the further progress of error and fanaticism in the town. Methodism was represented as a system of extortion, calculated to make its votaries

enthusiasts, and their children beggars. Peter was now urged to abandon a cause which had conferred no honour upon his family, and had been a constant drain upon his resources. But he had sense enough to know that this calamity was no proof of the badness of the cause he had espoused, and piety enough to enable him to continue steadfast in the faith: "Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

After much consultation and prayer, they resolved to replenish their funds by fresh contributions, to resume the works at the chapel, and to assist Peter to repair the damage done to his premises by the fire. Their building suffered no further interruption; and, on being finished, was opened for divine service, by Mr. Lowe and Mr. Shadford. This little structure, undertaken, prosecuted, and completed under such circumstances, has been to many, "the house of God and the gate of heaven." It is now filled with intelligent and devout worshippers who would, long since, have enlarged their borders, if a convenient site could have been procured. The same spirit of renovated piety broke out at Preston, Warrington, and other parts of the circuit; so that Mr. Lowe and his coadjutors, had the happiness to see their congregations multiplied, the Christian experience

of their people matured, and the finances of the circuit greatly improved. After filling up the places of those who had died during the year, and of such as had gone back to "the beggarly elements of the world," they had added to the church, one hundred and thirty-six members.

Some zealous Calvinists had tried to disturb the peace of several of the smaller societies, by forcing upon them their peculiar views of divine truth, but they did not succeed. These times of strife and debate have passed away, and the Calvinists of our day, having received the truth as it is in Jesus, and abandoned a theory which they perceive to be untenable, are willing to live in peace and amity with their Arminian neighbours. The writer of this memoir recollects two gentlemen, of the Baptist persuasion, calling on Dr. Clarke one day, to inform him that they had formed a Tract Society, for the villages of Eastcot, Pinner, and the neighbourhood; that they were then employed in distributing their tracts from house to house, and would be obliged if he would encourage and patronise their institution. After a friendly conversation on the subjects embodied in their tracts, the Doctor dismissed them. "These gentlemen," said he, "after they were gone, are employed in propagating the peculiarities of the Calvinian theology. I would not, for my right

hand, bid them God speed. That system, it is true, has been greatly improved during the last forty years. About that time, nothing was so popular among the dissenters, as the 'horrible decree,' and those preachers who were the most zealous in maintaining its equity, generally bestowed upon the poor Methodists a moderate share of abuse, for denying 'that eminent doctrine of grace.' The leading Calvinist ministers of our time, obtrude the '*cloven foot of reprobation*,' less frequently upon their congregations than formerly; and one would sincerely hope that they had discovered its deformity, as they have lately had the good sense to cover it with a boot." No person can contemplate the efforts that are now being made to remove whatever has a tendency to obstruct a general alliance amongst Protestant churches, and promote a better understanding and an improved state of feeling, without recognizing, in these unprecedented "signs," the answer to our Lord's prayer, that all "his disciples might be one," and the dawn of the latter day glory! Let the objects of this alliance be prosecuted in good faith and with a steady zeal, and what was seen through the vista of ages, as a prophetic vision will become a reality in the experience of the church. "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;

and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together ; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed ; their young ones shall lie down together ; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain : for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

The following Conference was held in Manchester, and rendered memorable by the modified constitution which it gave to Methodism. Much uneasiness had prevailed in the connexion, for several years, relative to the administration of baptism and the Lord's supper in Wesleyan places of worship. This uneasiness ripened into a strong feeling of dissatisfaction, which in 1792, burst into a flame and agitated the whole body. The Conference, however, after much discussion and prayer, resolved to delay the introduction of these ordinances generally, for, at least, one year.

In the mean time, certain trustees in Bristol proceeded to expel from their chapels, on their own responsibility, those preachers who differed from themselves on the subjects in dispute. This, as might be expected, increased the agitation, and

brought together a number of trustees, from various parts of the country, to the ensuing Conference. The whole of the first day was spent in fasting and prayer for divine direction. Several of the trustees joined with the preachers in these devotional exercises, and partook with them of the Lord's supper at the close. The plan of pacification then adopted, and which need not be analyzed here, "satisfied all moderate men." At the termination of its difficult and complex proceedings, the Conference issued an address to the societies, which breathed the same spirit of paternal and pastoral affection by which its members had been actuated during the whole session. "Beloved brethren," they observed, "we have done our utmost to satisfy every party, and to unite the whole. You, by your trustees, on the one hand, and your proper representatives, the leaders and stewards, on the other, are to determine concerning the introduction of the sacraments, or service in church hours, among yourselves. We have gone abundantly farther. We have, in some degree, deposited our characters and usefulness in your hands, or the hands of your representatives, by making them judges of our morals, doctrines, and gifts. We apprehend that we could have made no further sacrifice, without sapping the foundations of Methodism, and particularly destroying the itinerant

plan. O, brethren, be as zealous for peace and unity in your respective societies, as your preachers have been in this blessed Conference. Let the majorities and minorities on each side exercise the utmost forbearance towards each other; let them mutually concede to the other as far as possible: and, by thus bearing each others burdens, fulfil the law of Christ. Let all resentment be buried in eternal oblivion; and let contention and strife be for ever banished from the borders of our Israel." But these apostolic and hallowed sentiments were not responded to, by a party who had imbibed the spirit of the age, and who refused to be satisfied with any thing short of organic changes, and a large infusion of the democratic principle into the body. "The French revolution was raging in its fury, and threatening, not only to lay the thrones of Europe prostrate in the dust, but to dissolve the whole frame-work of society."

The rejection of Grattan's memorable Catholic Emancipation Bill, by the Irish parliament, had thrown that country into confusion, and armed every man against his brother. From that period, the political association, styled the Society of United Irishmen, rapidly extended itself over the whole country. All the Roman Catholics of the kingdom joined this community, and the leaders began to

entertain dangerous designs. Agents were sent to negotiate with the National Convention; acts of sedition, rapine, and murder, were perpetrated by the most desperate; while, on the other hand, the violent supporters of the system of exclusion confederated together under the name of Orangemen. Mutual injuries soon engendered a most inveterate hatred between these two descriptions of men, one of which was beyond comparison superior in number, and the other in property, in legal authority, and in military force; and these dissensions rapidly increased, till the whole land exhibited a scene of terror, consternation, and blood! A spirit of universal discontent pervaded the people of England, at the same time. Great apprehensions were excited by large assemblages of the populace, in various parts of the country, for political purposes. To increase the agitations produced by the conflicts of parties, a scarcity, rising almost to famine, prevailed throughout the kingdom. In the meantime, the doctrines of Thomas Paine, which were extensively promulgated, were stirring the national mind to the very depth of its feeling.* “He directed his votaries to pull down every establishment and level all distinctions, in order to enjoy fully ‘the rights of man.’ By far the greater number of the lower

* Life of George the Third.

ranks, and a considerable portion of the middle classes, were infected with the revolutionary fever which operated in the wildest and most extravagant ravings. Thomas Paine was represented as the minister of God, dispensing light to a darkened world; the most industrious and useful classes of the state were seized with a furious desire of abandoning their own course of beneficial and productive labour, and taking the management of public affairs into their own hands. All the levelling notions of John Bell, John Cade, and the fifth monarchy men, appeared to revive with an immense addition of new extravagance. The demagogues of the day directing the attention of their disciples to the established Church, taught them that the hierarchy was equally the bane of Christianity and rational liberty, and indulged in sanguine hopes that the downfall of our establishment was approaching."

"It would, indeed, have been surprising if the Methodist body had kept wholly free from the contagion of principles, that found numerous advocates amongst every denomination of professing Christians. There was a party in the Wesleyan connexion, who had imbibed notions of a *liberty* which Methodism did not allow. Some, at least, of the principal leaders of this party were young men; who had risen on the stage of action, and formed their views

and opinions in that state of things which the French revolution introduced. They entered not into Mr. Wesley's views of Methodism, as intended, by divine Providence, to effect a revival of religion *in the Church of England*; and that, in order to effect this, it was necessary to keep as closely attached to the establishment as possible; consequently, they could not endure those restraints which the Conference persisted in imposing upon the administration of the sacrament. They exclaimed against those restrictions, as an infringement on their Christian liberty, forgetting that others, who had different views, had rights as well as they; and that it would have been as great a violation of the rights of those societies which wished to receive the sacrament in the church, to impose it upon them, as it would have been to withhold it from themselves." The middle plan, of granting it under such restrictions that none should receive it but those who wanted it, did not at all suit men of such a temperament; and the plan of pacification adopted at the Conference, having finally settled the long and keenly disputed question on this basis, their displeasure was then directed against the Conference.

Such was the state of parties and of public feeling, when Mr. Lowe received an appointment to Nottingham, the focus of an anti-Wesleyan conspiracy.

He was no controversialist, and associated but seldom with "men given to change." He held the opinion that many of the written controversies of the Church might have been avoided, and her differences more satisfactorily and permanently adjusted, by verbal explanation and social prayer. In conjunction with his colleagues, Messrs. Hanby and Bartholomew, he gave himself wholly to his duties as a minister and pastor. They brought the societies more completely under the control of their disciplinary laws, and purified them, by removing from their fellowship objectionable persons. They visited from house to house, repressed all recriminating and irritating discussions at their official meetings, and frequently called the people together for special prayer, that a larger effusion of the Spirit's influence might be enjoyed in the means of grace.

In conformity with the principles of his spiritual administration, the Lord "granted their request." An improvement soon became apparent in the number and attention of their congregations; the ministry of the word was attended with increasing power, many were brought into deep distress on account of their sins, and every week individuals were saved into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The faith of God's people was strengthened and expanded; and their hopes and expectations so

quicken and elevated that they were constrained to sing, in anticipation of "greater things than these"—

"Lo! the promise of a shower,
Drops already from above;
But the Lord will shortly pour
All the spirit of his love."

On the evening of Christmas day, God verified his promise, and sent down upon his assembled people "showers of blessings." Mr. Lowe was appointed to preach in the principal chapel in the town, on the evening of that day. His mind was unsettled and distracted; having spent nearly the whole day in fruitless endeavours to fix upon a suitable text; so that he looked forward to the approaching service with painful emotions. While on his way to the pulpit, brooding over his own unfaithfulness, and the disappointment that awaited the people; reflecting, at the same time, upon the probable effects of that disappointment in checking the good work then in progress; the following passage was presented to his mind, with such force and vividness, as to rouse into intense action all his mental powers, and call into united operation all his christian principles and feelings:—"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was

lost." With this scripture there was given to him such views of the love of God and of the "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;" the lost condition of man, and the adaptations of the gospel method of salvation; and, with all, such "power from on high," that he preached with unusual enlargement of heart; and, as for the people, God "blessed them there." Just as he was closing the service, one of the leaders stood up and said with much feeling,—
"Brethren, I persuaded Mrs. —, whom you all know to have been for a long time in black despair, to come with me to the service this evening. While the preacher was repeating his text, she whispered to me, 'What! did the Son of man come to save the lost?' I answered, 'Yes.' 'Then,' she said, 'it must have been me; for I am that lost one!' In that moment she had power to believe, and here she is, at the feet of Christ, 'clothed and in her right mind.' Glory be to God!" The congregation burst into tears; and rising simultaneously from their seats, they fell upon their knees, and the chapel was like "Bochim,"—a place of weeping. While several of the brethren engaged in prayer, the Lord pardoned the believing penitent, comforted the feeble-minded, strengthened the weak, healed the backslider, and gave his people to feel, that, if they had tribulation in the world, and agitation in

the church, yet in him they had peace ! The ministry of God's word, the prayer meetings, and the class and band meetings, were numerous attended, both in town and country, and the sower and reaper rejoiced together in the abundance of the harvest.

This state of improvement continued till towards the Conference ; when a few factious men hoisted the standard of sedition, and formed the nucleus of what was called the "New Connexion." "I knew the persons well," said Mr. Lowe, "who promoted the division at Nottingham ; and though some of them were simple well-meaning men, the principal agents were complete jacobins !" The leader was a preacher of the name of Kilham. He was formerly coachman to Robert Carr Brackenbury, Esq., of Raithby Hall, Lincolnshire. This gentleman had a strong affection for Mr. Kilham, and was at some pains to make him acquainted with the first principles of general knowledge and Christian Theology. It was on his recommendation that he was admitted into the Wesleyan ministry. After he entered the itinerancy he became a diligent student, and raised himself to something like mediocrity ; but he was always rash, flippant, and superficial. His principles neutralized the beneficial effects of his knowledge, and rendered it subservient to the purposes of mischief. He began to manifest the

restless spirit of a *reformer* in the third and fourth years of his ministry. A certain writer has compared him to the horse-fly, which invariably passes over the sound part of the animal, and instinctively finds its way to the smallest wound, upon which it feeds, and which it always irritates. "It is certain, that during the twelve years he travelled in the connexion he was of little use, as Mr. Pawson has made appear from the minutes, tracing every place where he travelled, and the numbers in the societies : and truly, he made so humble a figure, that I am inclined to think many preachers did not even know him. I never heard him ; but I have been told that his gifts as a preacher were rather below mediocrity. But I am not acquainted with any man that ever entered our connexion that did half the mischief. I fear that many in Lancashire and Yorkshire have been driven, by his instrumentality, into infidelity and eternal ruin. Here we see, that however obscure or useless a person may be in the church and state, yet he may be extremely hurtful : and though not an instrument of good, yet an instrument of much harm. A fool may so fire a house, or a city, that all the wise men in it cannot extinguish the flames."*

Mr. Kilham denounced Methodism, as it was then constituted, as a system of despotism ; and the

* Rev. Thomas Taylor.

Conference as an assembly of ecclesiastical oppressors. He stood forth, he said, to repel the aggressions of the Conference—to advocate the rights of the people—to expand and liberalize the whole economy of Methodism. His opinion of the preachers, and his scheme for abridging their influence, and extending that of the people, are forcibly expressed by one of his confederates. “Their liability to err,” says this writer, “in judgment and practice, renders it necessary that others should be associated with them, to direct by their counsels, and support by their influence; to prevent decisions by which some might be injured, and others offended; and to assist in the adoption of such measures as the wants and wishes of the community may demand. The community, too, having such a property and interest in all its own institutions, possesses an unequivocal natural right to require such an association. The right, in fact, exists as perfectly in religious as in civil society; and may, therefore, be as freely claimed and exercised in the one as in the other. The representative system of government, which, as Britons, we hold so dear, and on which, as we have been made to feel, our civil liberties can alone securely rest, is equally adapted to religious society, and there, also, presents the surest guarantee against the errors of ignorance, inattention, and prejudice, and

the progress of covetousness, avarice, and revenge. Representation in the Church, to be efficient, must be extended to the highest, as well as to the lowest legislative assemblies." The most prominent feature in the new form of church government, was that of lay representation.

It will not be deemed irrelevant, here to introduce the opinion of a competent and impartial witness of another church on this point. "Unhappily for the spread of the other section of Methodism, it has generally adopted a *trustee* superintendence. This system, as far as the extension of the general cause is concerned, has not worked well: it has created a legal authority which may be opposed to the moral and ecclesiastical power; it has crippled the energies of ministers, or removed them to other spheres; and, by making them feel that, excluded, in a great degree, from responsible management, they acted a subordinate part, it has paralyzed talent which ought to have been kept healthy by exercise, and to have been encouraged in every legitimate attempt at proselyting men to the faith. The Wesleyans, on the other hand, conscious of personal responsibility as to their own executive power, have been *roused to action*, and have almost become a parliament in council, while they give an impulse to all the assemblies they direct and edify. 'Use talent and have

it' has been beautifully illustrated in this remarkable people. Had their founder placed his ministers under the control of a few lay or clerical *trustees*, Wesleyan Methodism would exhibit a very different front from that it now presents." *

Mr. Kilham and his party, while they urged the introduction of lay delegates, on the grounds of expediency and fitness, gave the Conference distinctly to understand what they might expect, should they decline the adoption of their theory. In that case, the following plan appeared to them well calculated to bring the Conference to reason and moderation. "If," said they, "every circuit were to determine, that the preachers' fund, the ticket money, the yearly and Kingswood collections, shall be kept in the hands of the town and circuit stewards: that *no person shall lead a class, or enter a pulpit*, till he has the approbation of a majority of the *leaders'* and *quarterly meetings*: that if any man be sent as a travelling preacher to any circuit, without the consent of such a majority, the preacher sent out, and the person who has recommended him shall be publicly branded as enemies to the whole of the connexion, and especially to the place where he is appointed to labour." Here it was boldly proposed to divest the ministerial office of its rectoral

* Lady Huntingdon's Life, Intro. to vol. 2.

character; to reverse the scriptural order of things, by making that office the lowest, instead of the highest in the Church; to constitute the leaders' and quarterly meetings a body of commissioners who should have the sole right of nominating to all offices, judging of the qualifications of the respective candidates, appointing them to their several offices, and of governing them in these offices. The Conference resisted these arbitrary and unscriptural demands, and pronounced the following sentence upon the principal delinquent:—"Whereas Alexander Kilham, has brought several charges against Mr. Wesley and the body of the preachers, of a scandalous and criminal nature, which charges he declared he could prove, and which, upon examination, he could not prove one of them; and also, considering the disunion and strife which he has occasioned, in many of our societies; we judge him unworthy of being a member of the Methodist connexion."

Inspired with a portion of that enthusiasm, respecting the rights of the people, which had then so generally seized the nation, Mr. Kilham and his faction still contended that *the people* ought to be introduced, by their representatives, into the Conference, and have a share in making their own laws. Aware that they could not effect such a revolution as

they wished, they separated, and formed a plan of church government upon their "lay trustee" principle. They called themselves "The Friends of the People," and urged the Methodists to join them, and thus enter at once into the liberty of the children of God! About one in eighteen, left the Conference and joined Mr. Kilham.

In the midst of this popular outcry for civil and religious liberty, many of the societies had the wisdom to suspect that the liberties of the people were not always most secure in the hands of those who made the loudest professions of regard for them; and they felt it to be what they owed to themselves, to the cause of God, and to the Conference, to avow, in such a crisis, what were their sentiments; and to support the Conference by the assurance of their attachment to it, and the declaration of their conviction, that Methodism, as a whole, and their own Methodistic rights and privileges, were safer in the hands of the Conference, constituted as it then was, than they would be if lay delegates should be admitted to its deliberations.

The Deed Poll of Mr. Wesley, which he enrolled in Chancery, defined the Conference, explained its functions, limited its powers, and possessed the validity of a last will and testament. The members of the Conference were constituted executors, but

the deed gave them no legal right to alter its fundamental principles, nor even to modify its provisions. Had the Conference yielded to these misguided men, they would have been chargeable with a gross violation of public duty, and the mal-administration of affairs of the greatest moment, left in TRUST, by the Rev. John Wesley, deceased. They, however, remained "obstinately faithful;" and, though the tempest swept over a large portion of the Connexion, its effects were less disastrous than might have been expected. Wherever the seceding party possessed the influence they seized, by violence or fraud, places of worship built for the sole use of the Methodist Conference, and broke up numerous churches formed by the zeal and labours of other men.

The following letter contains an account of the disruption of the societies in Nottingham, by an eyewitness of the conflict:—"For several years prior to Mr. Lowe's appointment to our circuit, religion had been at a very low ebb amongst us: owing to the agitation created by Mr. Alexander Kilham and others, respecting the government of the body. This agitation was carried on by the dispersion of inflammatory pamphlets, tending to bring the Conference into contempt. These publications led to angry discussions, and produced much animosity and discord amongst our people. Yet, in the midst of

this strife and contention, the Lord was pleased to visit us in a remarkable manner. The circumstances were extraordinary. One Sunday morning, in the month of October, while Mr. Lowe was engaged in prayer, in Hockly chapel, a leader, who sat in the front of the gallery, was so powerfully wrought upon by the Spirit of God, as to be irresistibly led to address the congregation at the conclusion of the prayer. He dwelt chiefly upon the love of Christ, and the evidences of that love. He set before them the misery of their condition, and the infinite willingness of God to save them from the guilt and consequences of all sin. He warned sinners of every description, and urged them, by various considerations, and with much fervour, to come to Christ; assuring them, that, if they would only come, he would bless them with an immediate and full pardon of all their sins. It pleased God so to apply this word of exhortation, that, though they were taken by surprise, yet the whole congregation were softened to tears, and broken down before the Lord. In that hour many were pardoned, and raised from a death in sin to a life of righteousness. The flame of divine love, thus kindled, spread from heart to heart, from house to house, and even from village to village, until the whole circuit was on fire. Old things having passed away, and all things having become

new, the voice of 'clamour and evil-speaking' was changed into thanksgivings and hallelujahs! Multitudes who beheld this work were 'amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it after this fashion.' Mr. Lowe, who was strong in faith and mighty in prayer, was eminently successful in carrying on and watching over this glorious revival. In ten months from its commencement, three hundred and twenty-two persons were converted from the world, and added to our society.

Just at this time the Conference was held in Leeds. Numerous delegates assembled from various parts of the kingdom to demand a redress of grievances. The Conference did not concede all they demanded, so that divisions took place in several circuits, and the societies in Nottingham did not escape. At this period, we had six hundred members in the town. Three hundred and twenty of the most influential of these joined Mr. Kilham's party, leaving us only two hundred and eighty of our poorer brethren. The leaders stripped us of every thing, so that we had no chapel for our people to worship in, nor a habitation for any of our three preachers. Thus circumstanced, we procured two small tenements for our married preachers, while the single man met with a cordial reception at the house of a friend. An old barn was substituted for a chapel,

in a mean but populous neighbourhood, to which many outcasts, who had never attended any place of worship before, flocked to hear the word of life, and where many were converted and added to the church. This barn was appropriated to the Sunday forenoon and Monday night services; a large chapel was borrowed for the Sunday evenings; and the Baptists were so kind as to lend us the Octagon, which we had sold to them, after the erection of Hockly chapel, for our Thursday evening service. In this way we went on, until the Lord enabled us to build our large chapel in Halifax place. In conclusion, I may observe, that Mr. Lowe was universally beloved throughout the circuit, previous to the division, and was afterwards rendered abundantly useful in reclaiming numbers who had wandered from the fold in a season of great temptation. The lapse of nearly half a century, has swept away some hundreds who esteemed him "for his works' sake," yet there are a few remaining, who greatly revere his name, and still retain the savour of divine grace which they received under his ministry." "In the midst of agitation and strife, he won the respect of all parties, as a faithful minister of Jesus Christ; and the remembrance of his name, even at this day, is to those who were witnesses of his Christian deportment, as 'ointment poured forth.' His minis-

try was strikingly earnest and powerful ; while his character was marked with such devotional seriousness, united with cheerful piety, Christian benevolence, and moral rectitude, as greatly endeared him to the people among whom he laboured.” *

Amidst the accumulated trials and insults to which the ministers were exposed, they received much encouragement from the active co-operation afforded by the officers of the society, and the warm and steady friendship of the members. None were more conspicuous in this work of Christian benevolence than the author of the above letter, Mr. Tatham and his family. When the preachers were ejected from their houses, several friends offered at once to take them into the bosom of their families, until the disturbed elements should become more settled. Mr. Lowe became an inmate in the family of Mr. Tatham, where he received such proofs of disinterested kindness as time could never obliterate from his recollection.

After Mr. Kilham had perfected his theory of church government, and organized his forces, he sent detachments in all directions, to offer their new constitution to the Wesleyan societies. Their efforts were not directed to instruct the ignorant, in the

* Extract from a letter, by the author of “Decision and Indecision.”

principles of Christian truth, nor reclaim the profligate to the faith of the Son of God ; but rather to break up foundations which had been laid by other hands, and scatter sheep which others had gathered into the fold, and for which their system did not provide either better pasture, or a more equitable or efficient form of discipline. Hence, their mission signally failed. A deputation from "these friends of the people," had gone out to Ilkstone, and, by various stratagems, seduced the whole society, taken possession of the chapel, and closed it against Mr. Bartholomew, one of Mr. Lowe's colleagues. On hearing of these proceedings, Mr. Lowe resolved to visit his old friends at Ilkstone, and ascertain by a personal interview, the cause of their separation from the Conference. On entering the town, several of his former hearers gathered around him, and expressed their regret, that, in consequence of what had taken place, they could not expect a sermon from him. Two young men were especially importunate, and offered, if he would consent to preach, to go to Mr. Michael Wilcock, the trustees' steward, for the key of the chapel. Having obtained his consent, they went to Michael, and informed him that Mr. Lowe had come, and was willing to preach, if he would give up the key of the chapel. He replied with much vehemence, "I shall do no such

thing. No conference preacher shall ever enter that pulpit again." His wife and daughter, however, united in the request of the young men, and so far softened his obstinacy, that he gave up the key, observing, "that it was for *that night only*!" He attended the service himself. The chapel was filled in every part, and Mr. Lowe preached with unusual effect. At the close of his sermon he said, "from my knowledge of the trustees, stewards, leaders, and members of this society, I am sure they must have been *beguiled* into that new theory of church polity, they have so generally and suddenly adopted. I understand that a report has been industriously circulated here, that neither myself, nor any of my colleagues, would preach in the town any more. That report has been spread for party purposes, and is not true. We shall continue to preach at the usual times, in some private house, and form a society immediately; and if any of you, my friends, who were formerly in connexion with us, feel regret for the steps you have taken, and are willing to return, I shall have much pleasure in putting your names down at the close of this service. On descending from the pulpit, he addressed himself to Mr. Birch, the leader of two large classes,—“well brother Birch, you must have left your old friends in a moment of severe temptation; will you come back?”

“I think I will,” said Mr. Birch, “we have acted very foolishly, and I have been very uneasy in my mind, for the part I have taken in the business. I have reason to believe that some of the other leaders and members are just as much vexed with themselves as I am.” The other leaders and members came forward as fast as Mr. Lowe could put their names down, and made a similar statement, until all were inserted in his book but the name of Michael Wilcock. Mr. Lowe then said, “Michael, you had better follow the example of your brethren; do; ‘come with us; we will do thee good, for the Lord has spoken good concerning Israel.’” Michael, who was exceedingly mortified, became sulky, and said, in a gruff manner, “No!” His wife turned round, and, addressing him, said, “Michael, you are an odd man. Where is the use of your standing out against the Conference? The other stewards have left you; the other leaders and their members have left you; nay, the members of your own class have left you: you must please yourself, but you are a shepherd without a flock; the sheep are all gone, Michael.”

On the following Saturday, Mr. Lowe received private information, that “the Friends of the People” had agreed to send a deputation to Ilkstone, on the following morning, for the purpose of more effectually

ally securing to themselves the society and trust premises. On becoming acquainted with their plan of operations, Mr. Lowe left Nottingham immediately for Ilkstone, called the people together, and spent the evening in exhortation and prayer. They assembled again, at eight o'clock on Sunday morning, and, while they were worshipping God, the gentlemen of the deputation arrived. They were astounded at finding Mr. Lowe and Mr. Brewister, of Ratcliffe, in possession of *their chapel*, and addressing *their people*; while the assembled worshippers, who had recovered from the temporary delirium into which misrepresentation and slander had thrown them, were calmly and profitably waiting upon God. The deputation interrupted the service, and were anxious to enlighten the people on the subjects lately in dispute between themselves and the Conference; but Mr. Lowe, being obliged to leave, having to preach in another village, terminated the altercation by saying, "Friends, I cannot think of leaving you in the hands of these designing men; they will hurt your minds, and perhaps ruin your souls: after singing a verse of a hymn, I wish you to go quietly home, and leave these gentlemen to take their own course." The congregation took his advice, and, on retiring from the chapel, raised a shout, "Old Methodism for ever! From this day we will double

our subscriptions!" The deputation returned to Nottingham, with their new constitution in their pocket, and the Wesleyans of Ilkstone remained without further molestation.

About this time Mr. Lowe exchanged a fortnight with Mr. William Bramwell, who was then stationed in Sheffield. During his temporary residence in that town, Mr. James Wood, the superintendent, received a letter one day from Mr. Bradburn, who was expected to preach in Sheffield that evening, to say, that Dr. Coke was on his way to Ireland, that he was obliged to accompany the Doctor to Hollyhead, and could not, of course, fulfil his engagement. Mr. Lowe's appointment was in the country, but he had provided a supply, that he might be present to hear Mr. Bradburn, and was on his way to the chapel for that purpose, when he met Mr. Wood, who informed him that Mr. Bradburn had not arrived. "My dear brother," said Mr. Wood, "this is a very unfortunate occurrence; the chapel is full, and it is within a few minutes of the time for commencing the service. There is but one way of getting respectably out of the difficulty, and lessening the disappointment to the people, and that is, for you, who are a stranger, to take Mr. Bradburn's place, and, as the occasion is special, the Lord will give you special aid." Mr. Lowe urged that he was

quite unprepared for such an emergency, and that it would be more respectful to the public for the superintendent himself to appear as the representative of so distinguished a preacher. Remonstrance, however, was vain, and Mr. Lowe was obliged to reconcile himself to the painful task. On entering the vestry, he found several brethren expressing their deep regret that faith had not been kept with the people, that the honour of Methodism should be tarnished, and that the superintendent should have made any announcement until he was morally certain that no disappointment was likely to occur. It was in vain that he listened for an expression of sympathy with the substitute of the absent preacher, or a devout wish that God would help him in such a "time of need." After lifting up his heart to God in silent prayer, he ascended the pulpit in "much weakness and fear." He was a plain, modest, unpretending man, and felt acutely the position into which he had been forced by circumstances beyond his control. On entering the pulpit, he perceived that Mr. Kilham, who was then holding his Conference in Sheffield, had come with his preachers to hear Mr. Bradburn, and had taken possession of the front of the gallery. Mr. Lowe was mighty in prayer, and, while engaged in that exercise, the Lord "delivered him from the spirit of bondage,"

and gave the people to feel that *He* was “come to bless them, in turning every one of them from his iniquity.” He selected for his text, Prov. xxvii. 12, “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.” For a short time he felt considerable embarrassment; for while he was defining the characters of “the prudent” and “the simple,” and describing the escape of the one and the punishment of the other, the people seemed, by their looks, to be applying the whole to Mr. Kilham and his proceedings. But, as he proceeded to lay open the nature of practical godliness and its consequences, and practical ungodliness and its results, a strong feeling manifested itself in every part of the chapel; each hearer appeared interested in his own fate, and all parties were obviously convinced, that there was, at least, one faithful instructor even in Nazareth! At the prayer-meeting, which immediately followed, a considerable number professed to have obtained the forgiveness of their sins.

In speaking of this service, thirty years afterwards, Mr. Lowe remarked, “at no period during the years of my public ministry, did I pass, in so short a time, through such a variety of mental exercises, as on that night. Before I went into the pulpit, my mind was absolutely vacant: it felt as if both knowledge and goodness had left it. I seemed to myself

to have lost all recollection, and to be cut off from all communion with God. On appearing before the people I stood speechless for an instant or two, not being able to command a single idea, nor to give utterance to a single sentence. I felt as if my very senses had left me. But neither before nor since, have I experienced such an abundant effusion of the spirit of wisdom and of power, as on that never-to-be-forgotten night. I received such views of the whole subject of the text, of the lost condition of man, and of the love of God in redeeming him ; and felt such pity and earnestness in persuading the people to come into covenant with God, as filled my soul with astonishment and gratitude."

Mr. Bramwell's visit to Nottingham, gave a fresh impulse to the work there ; and the societies "flourished, unconsumed in fire." It is an interesting fact, that, so soon as those factious men, whose revolutionary principles and devisive measures occasioned the rent in that town, were separated from God's people, the church became united, and the circuit rapidly advanced to a high degree of spiritual and pecuniary prosperity. After filling up the places of those who had died in the Lord, and of such as had been driven into the world by the enemies of peace and order, and of the three hundred and twenty who seceded with Mr. Kilham, the end of

the first year presented an increase of three hundred members.

It was impossible for Mr. Lowe, or any other man, to have passed through such a series of trials, and labours, and sacrifices, as fell to his lot, in the Nottingham circuit, without great patience, constant self-denial, and burning zeal. But the reader may enquire, Why recapitulate these irritating topics now, and run the risk of fanning the flame of animosity, and of leading "Judah to vex Israel?" We must remember, First,—That although the spirit of agitation be now dormant, it is not extinct; and may break out, on some future occasion, and convulse the whole Wesleyan community. In that case, it may be beneficial to have the spirit and conduct of those who have laboured in the same unhallowed vocation, portrayed before us. Their example should be admonitory to such as are in danger, from spiritual pride, of falling into the "same snare of the devil." "Offences will come: but woe *unto him* through whom they come! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones." Secondly,—It would be a great dereliction of duty were we not, in conformity to apostolic injunction, to "mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which

we have learned : and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly : and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." With what melancholy interest do we peruse the history which Moses supplies of the defection and schism of "Korah and his company." He traces the evil to its source, and exposes the subtlety and malignity with which it was attempted to subvert his own authority, and establish the doctrine of equality in the camp of Israel. With what force of expression does he dwell upon the enormity of their sin, and the unprecedented calamities in which it involved themselves and the whole body of the people. That this event might be rendered instructive to others, the Lord commanded Eleazer to take "the censers of these sinners against their own souls," and make broad plates of them, "for a covering of the altar," that they might "be a sign unto the children of Israel."

From the first day of its organization, the New Connexion has been like a patient whose constitution is radically bad : who often manifests symptoms of dissatisfaction with his condition ; often resolves to employ the most energetic means, with a view to its improvement ; and yet feels himself constantly counteracted by a cause inherent in the system.

When they shall have reversed their church polity, given to the christian pastor the *status* assigned to him in the New Testament, and restored the rectoral authority belonging to his office, then may they expect a greater degree of internal peace, and a more general spirit of subordination amongst their "lay trustees," to the scriptural ascendancy of the ministry.

While Religion was being wounded by strife and division "in the house of her friends," she was threatened with utter destruction by the spirit of republicanism which pervaded the land. On the 20th of December, the whole country was roused and alarmed by the sudden and unexpected invasion of Ireland by 15,000 chosen troops from France. They were sent to co-operate with a body of disaffected Irish, who were known to be considerable in numbers, and ripe for insurrection. The elements confederated against them, and a violent tempest scattered the French fleet, and forced the invaders to return home. It had been evident, for some time, that a dangerous connexion was carrying on between the society of united Irishmen and the French government, having for its object nothing less than a dissolution of the union between the two kingdoms. The principal conspirators gave details on oath, in their examinations before the secret com-

mittees of the two houses of parliament, from which it appeared that the rebellion originated in a system formed, not with a view of obtaining any reform, compatible with the existence of the constitution, but for the purpose of overturning the government, separating Ireland from Great Britain, and forming a democratic republic: that the means resorted to for the attainment of these designs was a secret systematic combination, artfully linked and connected together, with the intention of forming the mass of the lower ranks into a revolutionary force, acting in concert, and moving as one body: that, for the further accomplishment of their object, the leaders of the conspiracy concluded an alliance with the French directory in 1796, by which it was stipulated that an adequate force should be sent for the invasion of Ireland, subsidiary to the preparations that were making for a general insurrection: that, in pursuance of this design, measures were adopted by the chiefs of the conspiracy for giving to their societies a military form: that, for arming their adherents, they had recourse to the fabrication of pikes: that, from the vigorous and summary expedients resorted to by government, and the consequent exertions of the military, the leaders found themselves reduced to the alternative of immediate insurrection, or of being deprived of the means on which they relied

for effecting their purpose : and that, to this cause was to be attributed the premature breaking out of the rebellion, and probably its ultimate failure. It is estimated that in less than two months, thirty thousand lives were sacrificed, and property destroyed to an amount of which it is difficult to speak with accuracy : but some idea may be formed from the conflagrations which took place in different towns, and from the compensation claimed by one class of sufferers. The towns of Carnew, Tinealy, Hackits-town, Donard, Blessington, and Killedmond, were all destroyed by fire : in Ross, about three hundred houses, mostly those of the labouring classes, were consumed : the greater part of Enniscorthy was laid in ashes ; and in the open country, a vast number of cabins, farm-houses, and gentlemen's seats were destroyed. The claims of the loyalists alone amounted to upwards of a million pounds—a sum of great magnitude ; but, it is supposed, not equal to more than one-third of the entire property destroyed by a rebellion, in support of which it is believed that seventy thousand men were at one time in arms.

Such is the way in which Popery usually discharges her obligations to a Protestant state ! Ireland had long been, through her influence, “the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul

spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. Therefore her plagues came in one day : Death, and mourning, and famine. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.”

CHAPTER VIII.

Mr. Lowe is appointed to Howden—Observations on the character and ministry of the Rev. C. Hopper—Singular incident in the life of Rev. J. H.—Illness of Mr. Lowe, and his removal to Ripon—State of the country, and attempt upon the King's life—Effects of Mr. Lowe's ministry in a village near Ripon—Strictures on Finney's Work on Revivals—The best mode of conducting revival meetings—Remarkable answer to prayer—The benefits of sanctified affliction—Mr. Lowe appointed a third time to the Chester circuit—The work of God retarded by the heterodoxy of the Rev. Joseph Cooke, one of Mr. Lowe's colleagues—Mr. Cooke's views of justification by faith and the witness of the Spirit—His doctrinal errors exposed and refuted by the Rev. Edward Hare—A summary of Mr. Hare's arguments.

HOWDEN, in Yorkshire, was the sphere of labour assigned to Mr. Lowe by the Conference of 1799. Mr. Lowe was present at the Conference, which was held in Manchester, and heard Mr. Christopher Hopper deliver his last sermon. On ascending the pulpit, the venerable man said, "Christian friends, —I cannot describe the feelings I experienced on being informed that I had been announced as the

preacher for this evening. You perceive that I am an old man, just finishing my course, and very unequal to the task of addressing so vast an assembly as this. The power of distinct utterance is gone, and I can only chatter like a crane or a swallow. My sword, which has been little used of late, was rusted in the scabbard, and required a hard pull to unsheath it; but, now that it is fairly drawn, I trust that God will give you to feel that it is a true Jerusalem blade." As he advanced in his discourse, he became very animated, and, rising above the infirmities of decaying nature, urged upon his hearers, with apostolic fervour, the importance and necessity of being "reconciled to God." The heavens seemed to be opened upon the people, and the Lord "poured out a blessing, till there was not room enough to contain."

This eminent man commenced his itinerancy when "the lower orders of the people, especially, were sunk into such a degree of ignorance, superstition, bigotry, immorality, and brutality, as, perhaps, had not before been known, since the first dawn of the glorious reformation to that time." Finding them in a condition so truly deplorable, it was natural for the preachers, who were supposed to have no right to legal protection, to expect the most determined and abusive opposition: and they were not disap-

pointed ; for, wherever they came, the uproar of the enraged multitudes was as the sound of many waters. For many years successively their lives were in continual jeopardy in every part of the kingdom : they were stoned, they were cast into the most loathsome prisons, they were dragged through the streets by the hair of their head, they were thrown into pools and rivers of water, they were seized as vagrants, and pressed for soldiers ; some were transported to the colonies abroad ; many fled to caves, and to the hiding-places of the earth ; and one, at least, fell a victim to the inhumanity of the mob ! And, but for the signal interpositions of a gracious Providence, they must all have inevitably fallen by the violence of the people ! Yet, violent as was the spirit of persecution which they everywhere met with, it certainly did not exceed the zeal with which those burning and shining lights persevered in the work of the Lord, who, in the midst of “ firebrands, arrows, and death,” shook “ the gates of hell,” and valiantly pressed through all that opposed or impeded their way ! continuing to spread themselves more and more in every direction, preaching in the highways and hedges, in fields, streets, barns, cellars, and garrets, with the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. The word of God gloriously prevailed ; prejudices began to melt away ; the storm

of persecution gradually abated; and the remarkable conversion of many notorious profligates and persecutors compelled their most virulent adversaries to confess that God was with them.

Among the honoured instruments of this extraordinary work, Mr. Hopper deservedly held a distinguished place. It often happened, while he was delivering his message to tumultuous assemblies, with an energy which strongly marked the interest he himself had in it, that giddy triflers, impious despisers, ringleaders of mobs, and the most abandoned reprobates, have wondered, trembled, and given signs, as convincing as they were sudden, of the deepest compunction and sorrow of heart; the bitter wailings of penitent prisoners have been turned into songs of deliverance; and the whole assembly has been awfully affected with a sense of the majesty and presence of God. I remember seeing, but a little time before his death, a congregation consisting of more than two thousand, melted into tears, while his fervent soul was pleading with God, in the midst of them. Thus did this man of God hold on his way, till the weary wheels of life stood still, and dust returned to dust." *

"I remember," said Mr. Lowe, alluding to these times of lawless violence and brutish ignorance,

* Rev. T. Cooper.

“receiving an amusing description of an unusual scene, which occurred at one of the Conferences. In reviewing the characters of the preachers, there was a pause when the name of J. H. was announced. It was stated that the people among whom he had been labouring were extremely hostile to Methodism, and rude and barbarous in their conduct towards the preachers; that Mr. H. had suffered much, and borne these sufferings with exemplary patience: but, notwithstanding the diligence and fidelity with which he had generally discharged his duty, he had been guilty of one indiscretion which the Conference could not overlook. “John H.,” said Mr. Wesley, “stand up; what is this that you have done?” “Well Sir,” said John, “I went into the country parts of my circuit, as usual, to preach, and, at one place, I was interrupted almost as soon as I commenced my sermon. The person who interrupted me appeared to be respectable, and stood right before me. After I had uttered a few sentences he said, ‘That’s a lie!’ I took no notice of this, but went on; I had not, however, proceeded far, before he again said, ‘And that’s another lie!’ I felt indignant, but still I went on, hoping that the gentleman would sit down and be quiet, when he saw that the people were annoyed, rather than amused, by his conduct. But in this I was disappointed, for,

in a few minutes, he said again, 'That's the greatest lie he has told!' I then spoke to him, requesting him not to interrupt me, and assuring him that I would converse with him freely on these subjects after the service. Still it was of no use; he kept on repeating, at the close of every alternate sentence, 'and that's another lie!' The place was crowded, and the people very attentive, and I was grieved to the heart to see such an opportunity for doing good lost through the perverseness of one individual." "And what then?" said Mr. Wesley. "Why, Sir, I then said, If you don't be quiet I'll make you quiet. I felt, at the moment, that I had committed myself; but I really could not help it." "Did anything else occur?" said Mr. Wesley. "Yes; I then came down, and, taking him by the collar and putting my other arm under his hams, carried him out, and laid him down in a ditch that carried off the water from some dunghills in the neighbourhood." "And what next, John?" enquired Mr. Wesley. "I then returned to the preaching-room, and finished my sermon, and a blessed time we had." Mr. Wesley, whose patience had often been similarly tried, could scarcely preserve his gravity at this ludicrous exhibition, and reproved his helper by saying, "O John, John, you must not do so any more."

The mental anxiety and bodily fatigue through which Mr. Lowe had passed in Nottingham, had reduced his strength, and rendered it difficult and painful for him to accomplish the long walks and exhausting labours of the Howden circuit; and an injury he had received in one of his hip joints, by the overturning of a coach, increased the difficulty. But no ordinary degree of weakness could induce him to neglect any of his appointments, to abridge his ministerial labours, or omit his pastoral visitations. Nor were his ailments or infirmities ever obtruded upon the people: in his intercourse with them he was always cheerful, always happy. There was the same zeal in the pulpit, and the same devotional earnestness in his conversations and prayers with the families of his hearers. At this period, he derived much encouragement and instruction from the word of God, which he read and studied with increasing diligence and prayerfulness. These exercises gave him a deeper insight into his own character, and enabled him to detect many evils that had lain concealed in the folds of a deceitful heart. These discoveries led to the prostration of his whole soul before God in deep humility. Considering himself simply as the *instrument* of good to others, he perceived a closer connexion than he had previously supposed to exist, between the fitness of the

instrument and its successful application. He was thus led to ask of God a more complete deliverance from all sin. The Lord responded to his prayer, and saved him in a great degree, from pride, hardness of heart, and evil desire. Breathing the atmosphere of heaven himself, his ministry was peculiarly rich in evangelical sentiment and divine unction. The societies felt the benefit of his vigilant oversight, his impartial administration of discipline, and his devoted attention to every thing involving either their spiritual or temporal welfare. They were brought into a more intimate union with each other, mutual confidence was restored, and the work of God prospered. Those jealousies and heart-burnings, which the publications and divisive measures of Kilham had occasioned, subsided, and the people settled down into order and submission under the Conference. Although the circuit exhibited the usual fruits of ministerial efficiency, an increase of religion, and an accession of members, yet Mr. Lowe felt himself obliged to remove to Ripon, at the end of one year, in the hope of improving his health.

The past had been a year of extreme national and connexional trial. The harvest of the two preceding years had been very unproductive; and the evil being enhanced by the consumption and waste of

war, a prodigious rise on every article of provision took place, the consequence of which was, real and widely extended distress. The interference of the Legislature, in attempting to remedy, or at least to palliate the public calamity, was judiciously confined to recommendatory, rather than coercive measures. The committee appointed to deliberate upon the subject, suggested such methods of relief as appeared most effectual for diminishing the consumption of corn, by economy and substitution; and held out encouragement to the extended growth of potatoes at home, and the importation of corn from foreign countries. To give effect to the proceedings of the Legislature, on this important subject, His Majesty issued a proclamation towards the close of the year, recommending the greatest frugality in the use of every species of grain; and exhorting and charging all masters of families, to reduce the consumption of bread in their respective families, by at least one-third of the quantity consumed in ordinary times, and in no case to suffer the same to exceed one quartern loaf for each person in each week. This state of things seriously affected the connexional resources, and involved the Conference in considerable pecuniary embarrassment. Those persons who have animadverted, with so much severity, upon the occasional diminution of numbers and income that

have occurred in Methodism, during its progress, have not had the candour to inquire, in how many instances this apparent failure, may have been the necessary consequence of the political and commercial condition of the country.

An attempt had been made in May, to assassinate the king. Just at the moment when His Majesty had entered the royal box, at Drury-Lane theatre, and while bowing to the audience, a person in the pit fired a pistol apparently at the king. The man, who proved to be a discharged soldier, of the name of Hadfield, was secured. On the 26th of June, he was arraigned for high treason; but it was clearly proved, that he had for several years laboured under a degree of insanity, in consequence of several desperate sabre wounds in his head, which he had received when acting as sergeant in the British army in Holland, in 1794. He was therefore acquitted on the ground of insanity. These circumstances being detailed to the Conference, they resolved to forward to His Majesty a congratulatory address. This address was graciously received and acknowledged by the king. This Conference made some important arrangements, with a view to extend the work of God in Wales, which have been attended with the happiest results in every part of the principality.

Soon after Mr. Lowe entered upon the work of his new circuit, he went out on a week-night to preach at a village about four miles from the town. The young men of the village, on hearing that the new minister was coming, resolved to go to the chapel, and have a little diversion. This was exceedingly common in those times; and although the preachers were often insulted, and their assemblies sometimes broken up, they seldom obtained redress by an appeal to the local magistracy. On the occasion referred to, Mr. Lowe took for his text, Psalm iv. 22., "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear *you* in pieces, and there be none to deliver." From this passage of scripture he proceeded to describe,—

I. The magnitude of the sin threatened—"Forgetfulness of God." He dwelt chiefly upon the *prevalence*, the *ingratitude*, and the *practical atheism* of this sin.

II. The severity of its punishment—"Lest I tear *you* in pieces, and there be none to deliver." This was represented as setting forth—the *suddenness*, the *painfulness*, and the *perpetuity* of their punishment.

III. The wisdom of "considering," these things—"Now consider this, ye that forget God"—God was calling them to consideration "*Now!*" As

they had neglected the duty so long, they ought to set about it "*Now.*" Unless they attended to it at once, they might be deprived of all future opportunity. He had faithfully warned them; and "*Now,*" left them without excuse. When he commenced the service, the young men seemed restless and prepared for mischief; but as he proceeded they became attentive and serious, and before he concluded several of them were affected to tears. The ring-leader of this little band, "who came to laugh, remained to pray." His name was Lancaster. His distress was deep, but the Lord "bound up his broken heart." He immediately joined the society, and became decided and exemplary in his Christian profession. He devoted himself to reading and study, and began to exercise his gifts in the class and at the prayer-meetings. It soon became apparent to his brethren, that the Lord had called him to occupy a more prominent place in his church. He entered the itinerancy in 1804; and, after labouring in harmony with his brethren for twenty-six years, he died in peace. He possessed a sound judgment, a well cultivated mind, and respectable ministerial gifts; in the exercise of which the Great Head of the Church made him a blessing to many souls. Such is a brief outline of the character and history of the late Rev. John Lancaster, editor of the Life

of Lady Maxwell, of Pollockshaws, Scotland. The conversion of Lancaster, and several of his youthful companions, was but the prelude to the general revival of religion which immediately followed. The word of God seemed to be irresistible: and some times five, and at other times six individuals were converted under one sermon.

In many instances it has been found difficult to account for those surprising effusions of the Spirit, by which religion has been revived and extended in particular churches, or throughout the provinces of an entire country. Some have resolved it into the sovereignty of God, and others into a believing and energetic application of the appointed means. Perhaps both should be devoutly recognised and acknowledged. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation;" and if the church of Christ is to be "edified," as well as "multiplied," she must have seasons of "rest." But while a calm and serene sky, with the nightly fall of the dew, are necessary to advance vegetation and ripen the fields in autumn; the earthquake, the thunderstorm, and the fierce tornado,—that establish the supremacy of God, and disturb the balance of the elements,—may be equally necessary to quicken the apathy of nature, and promote, upon a grand scale of benevolence, the good of man. "At no period in the history of the

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British Churches, did they possess such facilities for spreading vital godliness over the land as at present. Never did they command such an host of well organised auxiliaries. Look at the amplitude of their means and the number of their agencies. And then ask whether the effects upon the national mind and character be proportionate? We think, with all deference and humility, that they are not. Instead of "putting on the whole armour of God," and going out "terrible as an army with banners," to repel the progress of the common enemy, and carry the war into his own territories, they seem to look with complacency on the science they have displayed in the construction of their fortifications, and in the strength of their own citadel." There is reason to believe, that the annual increase of true believers in this country, is comparatively small. We are told, indeed, that this is easily accounted for, without supposing any abatement of ministerial zeal, or any diminution of sanctified effort on the part of the members of the church. The visible and wonderful effects resulting from the ministry of Wesley, Whitfield, and others, is traced to the circumstances of their having revived doctrines that had become obsolete, and presented these doctrines with such perspicuity and force to the public mind, as at once to surprise, alarm, and convert multitudes. Now,

as regards their doctrines, and their mode of stating them, this may be very true ; but their success must be traced to other causes than that of a power inherent in their doctrine. The true key to the right interpretation of the "signs and wonders" which attended their ministry, is to be found in the declaration of God to Zerubbabel, "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts !" "The hand of the Lord," was eminently with these men ; and "the Spirit of the Lord," was abundantly "upon them." Hence the people felt that they could not resist the "sword of the Lord and of Gideon." If they "triumphed in every place," it was the Lord "that always caused them to triumph in Christ, and made manifest the savour of his knowledge by them." If, therefore, there be the same adaptation in the instrument, there is the same promise to encourage its use, and the same power to succeed its exercise.

But it is possible for a ministry to advance in intelligence, and excel in the art of preaching, and, at the same time to decline from the apostolic spirit, and become incapable of producing the apostolic fruit. Any church may compromise her principles, and make merchandise of her power. "Thank God," said a cardinal to a monk, who had just placed his annual revenue upon the table, "the

church can no longer say 'silver and gold have I none.'” “No, my lord cardinal,” said the monk, “neither can she now say ‘take up thy bed and walk.’” She had risen in wealth, but she had fallen in power. Even Methodism, which is the healthiest branch of the national church, does not, at this moment, present *unusual* appearances of increasing fruitfulness. Oh, might she have yet another and more copious baptism of fire! Frequently has she been blest with gracious revivals of religion, which have spread over large districts of country, and issued in the conversion of thousands of souls. Many useful treatises have been published, of late years, on this subject, containing valuable instructions and directions as to the best means of promoting and sustaining these religious revivals. The most popular of these is by an American writer of the name of Finney. His work has been published in all the intermediate sizes, between the 8vo. and the 24mo. : and at almost all the intermediate prices, between ten shillings and ten pence. It has been spread over the whole kingdom, and read with avidity by all denominations of Christians : but none, perhaps, have bestowed upon it a more extensive patronage than the Wesleyans. The book has become so great a favourite with many, that to speak disapprovingly of either the author or his work, is to run

some risk of being put down as an enemy to the progress of Christ's kingdom. But, even at that risk, we would earnestly recommend to religious people, to read all the productions of Mr. Finney with extreme caution. We freely admit that there is much that is scriptural, striking, instructive, and impressive in his work: but, we hold ourselves in readiness to prove that there is also much that is *unscriptural*, *misleading*, and *dangerous*. His volumes abound with evidence that he is an unskilful critic, and a bold expositor of God's word. The dogmatism and flippancy with which he discusses some of the most recondite doctrines of divine revelation, show that his biblical studies were superficial and desultory. A divine who has the effrontery to declare, that the doctrine of human depravity is as untrue as it is unscriptural, and endeavours to prove both, cannot be looked upon as a safe guide in the subordinate branches of Christian Theology. If religious people will peruse the works of authors of such various and contradictory principles as Finney, they should, at least, be careful to separate the "precious from the vile."

It appears to us, First,—That in all attempts to revive religion in a church, the Bible should not only occupy a prominent, but the *most* prominent place. Other means may be used, and other instruments

employed, with every prospect of success, but this is God's chosen instrument. It is like the "sword of Goliath," amongst the instruments of aggressive warfare. "Give me that," said David, "*there is none like it!*" It is true that it is the office of the Holy Spirit to enlighten, instruct, and convert men; but he ordinarily employs the Bible as the medium through which to convey his "grace and truth," to their understandings and consciences. If light is to be thrown upon the character of God, the nature and consequences of sin, the offices of Christ, or the conditions and privileges of salvation, that light must emanate from the sun of revealed truth. If a congregation is to be suddenly, and simultaneously, "pricked to the heart," and constrained to "cry out, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter must be there to *explain* the truth, and the Spirit of God to *apply* it. If the persons, thus awakened, are to be brought into communion with God and his people, they must be drawn to Christ, and to that communion, by the magnet of truth. If a religious society is to be melted into love, and warmed into the intensity of Christian zeal, a "live coal must be brought" from off the altar of truth. Those ministers, and religious societies, who substitute human expedients for the institutions of God, and expect as much from an "arm of flesh," as from the "sword

of the Spirit," will be miserably disappointed. On the other hand, the art of using the word of God aright, is the true art of "turning many to righteousness."

In conformity with these views, we would recommend;—Secondly,—That, in all special services, set up for the revival of religion, some portion of the word of God should not only be read but expounded. Is the principle object of the service the conversion of sinners? Then it should be borne in mind that it is "the law of the Lord that converteth the soul." Surely that law should be stated and explained: its claims should be enforced, and the utter impossibility of being "justified by its deeds," pointed out. Now is the time for the church to "come to the help of the Lord against the mighty;" and, by united and protracted prayer, to wrestle together until the law, being divinely applied, brings the sinner to Christ, and the glory of the Lord fills his house: or is the service conducted with an immediate reference to the justification of such as are penitent? It is equally clear that this can only be effected through the "belief of the truth." And then it is truth revealed, truth understood, truth felt, and truth embraced. This truth, embodied in the promise of God, forms the foundation of justifying faith;—Christ, as a media-

tor between God and man, is its exclusive object; and "peace with God" is at once its evidence and its fruit. Those whose distress is great should be separated from the assembly and formed into a class by themselves, either in the place of worship where the meeting is held, or in the adjoining vestry. This, in many cases, is a good barometer for ascertaining the strength of conviction. The man who has not humility enough to take up his cross and join the penitents, is not likely to obtain forgiveness in his pew: and the man that is prepared to accept that blessing is generally willing to place himself in the most humiliating position to receive it. The most judicious persons should be selected to converse with them, in an under tone of voice, that conviction may be deepened, hope encouraged, and faith strengthened. While thus engaged, the "Lord clothes his priests with salvation, and causes his people to shout for joy." But, supposing the object of the service be that of bringing the members of the church into a higher state of Christian enjoyment, even then they are to be "sanctified by the truth." It is surely proper that their attention be directed to the nature and necessity of this blessing; to the examples of those who are said, in the word of God, to have attained it; to the promises of scripture which present it as the object of faith; and

to the consequences of dying without it. Oh ! what prayer ! what earnestness of prayer ! what constancy of prayer ! there should be, that God would connect himself more visibly and powerfully with his own ordinances.

We would recommend ;—Thirdly,—That the plan adopted, for the revival of religion, in any place, be such as may secure the hearty co-operation of as large a proportion of ministers and lay officers as possible. The ministers especially should be united. And even where their judgment cannot altogether acquiesce in every part of the proposed arrangement, yet, for the accomplishment of so desirable and important an object, the very appearance of hostility, and even of lukewarmness should be avoided. These occasions furnish valuable opportunities for the legitimate exercise of every modification of talent and grace which the church may possess. Here each member, if rightly engaged, may contribute to the edification and increase of the whole body. And surely it is infinitely desirable that the evidences of christian concord, of harmonized and continued exertion, together with the steady exhibition of zeal and liberality in the cause of Christ, should, at last, convince the world, that the Church is going on to “the prize of her high calling, which is of God in Christ Jesus.”

The reader will recollect, that the conversions which took place under the ministry of Mr. Lowe, and which gave rise to these observations, occurred in the ordinary exercises of that ministry. And certainly it is to this, rather than to occasional and extraordinary efforts, we must look for the establishment and further extension of the kingdom of Christ in the world. Mr. Lowe's "wisdom in winning souls," did not consist in the dexterous and believing use of any one instrumentality in particular, but in the employment of every conceivable and practicable means for the accomplishment of this object. Time, talents, opportunities, and health, were made subservient to the great work of saving souls. The week day and the sabbath, the winter and summer, seasons of weakness as well as seasons of vigour, were all filled up with labours tending to advance the cause of God. The appeals of suffering humanity, were cheerfully responded to; and the enquiry of the jailor, if it came at "midnight," was never deemed unseasonable. The worst case that came under his observation, was made the subject of faith and hope. He was requested, one night, at a late hour, to visit a man who was dying of consumption. The man had been long ill: his medical attendant had given him up; and his end seemed to be near. Mr. Lowe took the person at

whose house he lodged, who was a man of deep piety and of great power in prayer, with him. On reaching the house, they found the poor emaciated creature panting for breath, and his disconsolate family weeping by his bedside. They were both deeply affected; but, having an unbounded faith in God, they went down upon their knees, and entreated Him that, for Christ's sake, he would "show forth all his power," in restoring the sufferer to health. The man himself, who had lived in the fear of God, united heartily in their petitions. When they rose from their knees, he said, "I feel better: I believe the Lord has answered your prayers: you see I breathe with less difficulty." From this hour he rapidly recovered; and, in one month, was able to resume his usual avocation. Even the profane acknowledged the hand of God in his recovery, and said, that "the prayers of the Methodists had done him more good than all the doctors!"

Soon after this, Mr. Lowe was seized with a severe fever, which suspended his public labours and brought him to the gates of death. Indeed, such was his weakness at the Conference, that he was obliged to solicit a year's rest, and sat down, as a supernumerary, at Macclesfield. He was now to prove that the extraordinary, as well as the ordinary, events of life form a part of that mysterious economy

by which providence prepares God's servants for future distinction and glory. This was a trying dispensation, but he acknowledged the supremacy of God in it; and could say with the Apostle, "I know that this shall **TURN** to my salvation through your prayers, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." This important and endearing characteristic of the divine government, is often disclosed in the inspired writings. The loss of Joseph was regarded by his family as a great domestic calamity: "Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted: and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him." But while Jacob was thus inconsolable, an invisible agency was erecting and setting in motion a machinery, as varied and complex as were the wheels in Ezekiel's vision, for the very purpose of causing this event to "**TURN**" to the honour of his family, the elevation of his son, and the temporal "salvation" of nations! The subsequent imprisonment of that son in Egypt, with its attendant circumstances of humiliation and suffering, led him to conduct himself with increasing caution and moderation when he became prime minister of that country. The

dark cloud that gathered and settled so long upon the family and prospects of Job, was at last dissipated, and the "candle of the Lord," shone forth with increasing splendour "upon his tabernacle." The Apostle, having these and other facts of sacred history before him, intimates, in the above passage, that although suffering all the miseries of an uncertain imprisonment, though these miseries were embittered by the ungrateful conduct of "some who preached Christ even of envy and strife, and contention; supposing to add affliction to his bonds;" Yet he felt a confident hope, that these evils would be made to "TURN" to the "furtherance of the gospel," to the increase "of the joy and faith of God's people," and to the attainment of the chief object of his solicitude, which was, "that Christ might be magnified in his body, whether it were by life, or by death." He evidently alluded to that wonderful interposition of providence, by which the waters of the red sea were made to "TURN" to the "salvation" of Israel, from the hands of Pharaoh. On that occasion the instrument of "salvation" to his people was "TURNED" against their enemies, and swept them, in one confused mass, into the depths of the sea.

The afflictions of life have no *natural* tendency to promote the salvation of man; and it is only by

the faith of the sufferer, by the prayers of the church, and by the "supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," they can be rendered conducive to this great end. You have no doubt stood upon the sea shore, and watched the progress of the tide and the tempest. You saw the waters gradually ascend the rock, until it became completely submerged. You were led to suppose, from the frequency and violence of the waves, that they must have shaken it to its base, and broken it away in fragments. But, on the receding of the waters, you perceived it occupying precisely the same position it had done before. This rock is the type of a wicked man in adversity. We have been moved by the severity of his trial, we have listened to his penitent confessions, we have heard his prayers; there seemed to be all the external evidences of a deep and universal change of principles and disposition; but, when the tempest of adversity had subsided, we have seen that, like the rock, he had resisted the confederated forces of providence and grace. We see the difference between the *natural* and *sanctified* effects of affliction strikingly illustrated in the case of Job and his wife. As he stood over the remains of his deceased children, and analyzed the unprecedented trials through which he had passed, he said, in adoring submission, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away:

blessed be the name of the Lord :” and, instead of calling in question the wisdom and equity of the divine procedure, he added, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him !” On the other hand, his wife, who had witnessed the same vicissitudes and suffered similar privations, continued unhumbled and imperious in her spirit. “She said unto him,” with great asperity of feeling, “Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God and die.” Had she exercised “prayer,” so as to obtain a “supply of the Spirit” of grace, as her husband seems to have done, these disciplinary acts of providence, instead of hardening her heart, would, as in his case, have been made to “turn” to her “salvation.”

Participating, in a blessed degree, in those views and feelings by which Job and Paul were influenced in seasons of peculiar trial, Mr. Lowe relinquished his official duties and submitted to the chastisement of the Lord, in the spirit of believing resignation. But, on every indication of improvement in the state of his health, he was found assiduously cultivating some part of the spiritual vineyard. He frequently occupied the pulpit, met classes, conducted prayer-meetings, and visited the sick and dying. His partial exemption from the severer duties of the ministry, produced the desired effect ; and, at the end of the year, he was able to resume the itinerancy,

in the Chester circuit, to which the Conference of 1802 appointed him. Though this was the third time he had been stationed in that circuit, yet that intelligent and affectionate people, duly appreciating his character and labours, received him with much cordiality. The business of the Conference had been conducted and closed with the utmost unanimity. The people had given the strongest proof in their power, of their love to their ministers, and the cause in which they were engaged, by contributing freely to the extraordinary collection, to which they were exhorted by the last Conference. So that there was as much money raised as covered the liabilities of the connexion. At no former period, since the death of Mr. Wesley, had this been the case. On the morning the Conference closed its session, the Rev. Dr. Coke, assisted by the Rev. Adam Averell, administered the Lord's Supper to the preachers: after which, several of them prayed, and parted with many tears, accompanied with the kiss of charity. All that were present acknowledged the power of God.

To Mr. Lowe, this was a year of much discouragement. The circuit enjoyed peace, the congregations were good, the lay officers were united and zealous, yet there seemed to be no increase of religion and few converts from the world. Every

thing moved on heavily. There did not seem to be remissness any where ; and yet there was obviously a great want of power and vitality. Before the end of the year it was discovered that Mr. Joseph Cooke, one of Mr. Lowe's colleagues, had been cautiously, but effectually, counteracting the work of God, and subverting the faith of the people. He had embraced peculiar views of Justification by Faith, and the Witness of the Spirit : and under the pretext of *defending* these cardinal doctrines, as expounded by Mr. Wesley and incorporated in his writings, he virtually denied them.

“The plain scriptural notion of Justification,” says Mr. Wesley, “is pardon, the forgiveness of sins. It is that act of God the Father, whereby, for the sake of the *propitiation made by the blood of his Son*, he shews forth his righteousness (or mercy) by the remission of sins that are past. And from the time we are accepted *through the beloved*, reconciled to God through his blood, he loves, and blesses, and watches over us for good, even as if we had never sinned. Justifying faith implies, not only a divine evidence or conviction, that God *was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself*, but a sure trust and confidence, that *Christ died for my sins*, that he *loved me*, and *gave himself for me*.” Mr. Cooke considered these definitions unguarded,

and ambiguous. And because God is pleased to accept a lower kind of faith in a Gentile or a Jew, according to the inferior light of their dispensation, and, in an inferior sense, justifies such without the express knowledge of the death of Christ, and its happy consequences ; he took it for granted, that where the *gospel* is preached, as at this day, God requires no *other faith*, superior to theirs, in order to our justification : nor holds out to us a justification to be accompanied by greater present privileges, than those which they enjoyed. But undoubtedly, the more express knowledge which God has given to us of his method of justification by the *blood of Christ*, requires a faith which fixes *directly* on the *atoning sacrifice*, and leads to a justification more *clearly known* by us, and the fruits of which we more consciously enjoy. Mr. Cooke maintained that repentance and justifying faith are but different names for the same thing. “A knowledge of the nature of the Saviour’s *death and mediation*,” said he, “is not *essential* to justification : or to that believing which is the great mean of it. Hence the Apostles make no distinction between *penitents* and *believers* : much less do they speak of the one as in a state of *condemnation*, and the other of *justification*. Nor do they indeed so much as use the term *penitents*, or any *equivalent term* in all their writings.

Saul of Tarsus, when he persecuted the Christians unto death, long before he met with Jesus in the way, had been a *diligent* and *acceptable servant of the Lord*.”* The publication of these sentiments produced, as might be expected, considerable agitation, and led to much controversy. The late Rev. Edward Hare published a volume, in the epistolary form, in which the theological errors of Mr. Cooke were fully exposed and ably refuted. From the importance of the doctrines involved, and the perspicuous light in which they are presented in the work of Mr. Hare, which is now out of print, we deem no apology necessary for introducing the *substance* of his arguments into our pages. The whole may be comprehended under a few particulars.

1. “But as you,” Mr. Hare observes, “professing to preach the *gospel*, endeavour to persuade us, that we may be justified by a faith which has *no reference* to the mediation of Christ, nor to his dying the just for the unjust: it is necessary for me to prove to you, that where Mr. Wesley has defined the justifying faith of the gospel, as above, he insists upon the necessity of **THIS** faith, in order to our justification. ‘By affirming that **THIS** faith is the term or *condition of justification*, I mean that there is no justification without it.’ ‘He that believeth not is con-

* Sermon, p.p. 7, 9. Metho. Cond., p.p. 186—193.

demned already ;' and so long as he believeth not, that condemnation cannot be removed, but the '*wrath of God abideth on him.*' As 'there is no other name given under heaven, whereby a condemned sinner can ever be saved from the guilt of sin : so there is no other way of obtaining a share of his merit than *by faith in his name.* So that as long as we are without THIS FAITH, we 'are strangers to the covenant of promise, we are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and without God in the world.' Whatsoever virtues, so called, a man may have, *I speak of those unto whom the gospel is preached ;* for 'what have I to do, to judge them that are without ?' whatsoever good works, so accounted, he may do, it profiteth not : he is still a *child of wrath, still under the curse,* till he believes in Jesus.' I have for some time thought that the faith whereby we are justified under the *gospel of Christ*, implies our believing *with the heart*, 'that Jesus loved me and gave himself for me ;' that he 'hath borne all *my sins* in his own body on the tree ;' and 'that God was in Christ, reconciling me unto himself, not imputing to me my trespasses.' This, Sir, is that 'word of reconciliation' which we are called to believe : and how can we believe it without a 'knowledge of the nature of the Saviour's death and mediation ?' This knowledge you say is

not 'necessary to *justification*, or that believing which is the great mean of it.' This is the mysterious reason you assign, for pointing out to us the way of justification, without any troublesome references to the blood of the Lamb. If all the preachers in Christendom should preach justification by faith in the manner in which you preach it, we might justly say, to use a phrase of your own, 'How few would have even a chance of salvation.' "

2. "That the Apostles do not, in general, distinguish the members of the Christian churches into penitents and believers, persons condemned and justified persons, may perhaps be granted. But how is it you infer from hence, that they use no term *equivalent* to the term penitents? that they make no distinction between *penitents* and *believers*? and that they do not represent the one in a state of *condemnation*, and the other in a state of *justification*? Sir, is not *repentance* a term equivalent to the term *penitence*? And when repentance is spoken of as given to any persons, or practised by them, is not that the same in effect as calling those persons penitents? Again, does not the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, use the term repentance, and distinguish between *repentance* and *faith*, and consequently between *penitents* and *believers*? What do you understand by those words, 'There-

fore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection : not laying again the foundation of *repentance* from dead works, and of *faith* towards God ?' Do not think, my dear sir, that this distinction was uncommon with St. Paul. If it be not frequently found in his writings, it was quite *common* in his preaching. How could you be ignorant that he 'testified, both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, *repentance* toward God, and *faith* toward our Lord Jesus Christ.' Suffer me to say a little more on this distinction. *Faith* is believing ; *Repentance* is changing one's mind. They have different objects : *Justifying faith* relates to the death of Christ. The object of *repentance* is 'dead works,' or sin. They serve different purposes. *Repentance* is to *prepare the mind* of a sinner for the *reception* of pardon. By *faith* we actually receive it. That there is a *faith* which *precedes* repentance, we do not deny : for otherwise, *whence* should repentance spring ? But this is not *justifying* faith : for if it were, a sinner would be pardoned *before* he repents, which would be a contradiction of the words of our Lord, 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.' Yea, it is contrary to the general tenor of scripture, to suppose a man exalted *before* he is humbled : healed *before* he is wounded : finding *before* he seeks : or having his sins forgiven

before he confesses and forsakes them. But if the Apostle did thus distinguish between *repentance* and faith, he and the other Apostles did, in effect, speak of mere penitents as in a state of *condemnation*, and of believers as in a state of *justification*. Do you ask where? Where they frequently declare that 'he that believeth is justified:' and where they occasionally hint that he that believeth not *is not* justified. If repentance be *distinct* from justifying faith, and *precede* it, it follows that a person may be a penitent, but *not have* justifying faith; and, if so, he is *not justified*. Accept, dear Sir, one illustration for your further instruction on this important and scriptural distinction: When the Philippian jailor was awakened out of the sleep of sin, by the sudden interposition of the Almighty in behalf of his suffering servants, and by the affectionate exhortation of the Apostle, 'he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' Now here was a genuine *penitent*: if you do not deem that term unscriptural. His *serious inquiry* shews a deep *conviction* of his sin and danger. His *falling at the feet of Paul and Silas* proves his *humiliation*. His *trembling* demonstrates his *sorrow, shame, and fear*. His *bringing out* those whom he had lately

imprisoned with circumstances of unrelenting cruelty, is an actual *reformation* of his conduct, or putting away 'the evil of his doings.' Now this *we* call *repentance*. Was this man *already* justified? If so, why did not Paul and Silas inform him that he was *saved already*? Or, as you have it, that '*he was safe?*' But, instead of preaching *your* doctrine to him, they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou *shalt be saved.*' Sir, we fear that you are one of those who 'at the beginning set forth good wine: and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse.' But you ought to have known, that 'no man having tasted old wine, straightway desireth new: for he saith the *old is better.*' "

3. "You say, 'Saul did not persecute the Christians unto death, out of *malice* towards any man, or because he *took pleasure* in the suffering of others: but because he *verily thought that he* OUGHT to do *many things* contrary to the name of Jesus.' 'He did not persecute the church of God, *as the church God*: he did it *ignorantly and in unbelief.*'

'He not only did wrong *ignorantly*; but in the same *zeal* for God, in which he had acted before.'

'He was a *diligent* and acceptable servant of God: because, after the *straitest* sect of the Jews' religion, he lived a pharisee.'

‘He *served God from his forefathers with a pure conscience*: and took much pains to please God.’

To these propositions Mr. Hare replied—

1. “Though a man be as *ignorant* of the darkness of his mind, the wickedness of his heart, and the wretchedness of his condition, as *Saul* was, before his journey to Damascus: if he diligently serve God as a *pharisee*—he is justified.

2. “Though a man live in the frequent commission of any sin, not excluding *wilful murder*: if, like *Saul*, he thinks he ‘*ought*’ to do it, and intend to do *God service*—he is justified.

3. “Though a man be full of *unbelief*, *deny* the Lord that *bought* him, and even *blaspheme* his holy name: if, like *Paul*, he be ‘zealous towards God,’—he is justified.

4. “Though a man seek justification, ‘*not by faith*, but as it were by the *works of the law*,’ and go about ‘to establish his *own righteousness*:’ if he be as earnest and diligent as *Saul*—he is justified,

5. “Though God give to a man no *immediate* testimony of his favour: if that man be taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, be conscious of his own uprightness, and have the testimony of his own spirit that he takes much pains to please God, by living a strict pharisee,—he has all the assurance of the divine appro-

imprisoned with circumstances of unrelenting cruelty, is an actual *reformation* of his conduct, or putting away 'the evil of his doings.' Now this *we* call *repentance*. Was this man *already* justified? If so, why did not Paul and Silas inform him that he was *saved already*? Or, as you have it, that '*he was safe?*' But, instead of preaching *your* doctrine to him, they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou *shalt be saved.*' Sir, we fear that you are one of those who 'at the beginning set forth good wine: and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse.' But you ought to have known, that 'no man having tasted old wine, straightway desireth new: for he saith the *old is better.*' "

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bation, 'of which the nature of the case is capable,' and needs only to be more strictly Pharisaical, that he may 'hold fast the rejoicing of hope stedfast unto the end.' Thus we have reviewed the whole affair; and have found on it, the indubitable marks, not of Methodism, but of genuine Pharisaism. Your great error consists in supposing that the terms of salvation are now exactly the same as under the Old Testament."

Mr. Cooke also maintained, that his views of the Witness of the Spirit, were, like those of Justification by Faith, in perfect conformity with the scriptures and the writings of Mr. Wesley. Mr. Wesley defined the Witness of the Spirit in the following terms: "The testimony of the Spirit, is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God **DIRECTLY** *witness to my spirit*, that I am a child of God: that Jesus Christ hath loved me, and given himself for me: that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to God." The witness of our own spirit, he calls, "*rational evidence*," and illustrates it very happily: "Thus if he, any man, know, First, as many as are *led by the Spirit of God*, into all holy tempers and actions, *they* are the *sons of God*, for which he has the infallible assurance of holy writ: Secondly, I am thus *led by the Spirit of God*; he will easily con-

clude, therefore, I am a *son of God*. Yet all this is no other than rational evidence; the *witness of our spirit*, our reason or understanding. It all resolves into this: those who have these marks, they are the children of God. 1. The fruit of this, the Spirit's *ordinary influences* are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, meekness. 2. Whoever has these, *inwardly feels* them. And if he understands his Bible, he discerns from whence they come. Observe, what he inwardly feels, are *these fruits themselves: whence they come he learns from the Bible*. By *feeling*, I mean, being inwardly conscious of: by the *operations of the Spirit*, I do not mean the manner in which he operates, but the *graces* which he operates in a Christian." What Mr. Wesley calls the Witness of the Spirit, Mr. Cooke looked upon as "a mere creature of the imagination, which, if pursued, may lead us we know not where."* "It is obvious," says he, "that the Spirit's Witness, or testimony, is simply what the Spirit hath declared upon any subject of which it has spoken. We therefore repeat it, that the Witness of the Spirit, and the **ONLY** Witness of the Spirit spoken of in the Bible, by which the characters of men are to be determined, is, not what the spirit *may* declare to an individual, but what it

* Sermon, p. 19.

hath already declared in general, *i. e.*, as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are sons of God. To make the witness of the Spirit of God with our spirit, to amount to no more than an impression made by the Spirit of God upon the mind of man, assuring him of his acceptableness to God, as it makes the Apostle to speak only of one witness, *i. e.*, the Spirit of God bearing witness *to* our spirit: so it places the man at last in no higher circumstances than those of a pious Jew or Heathen, who has *ever known that those who fear God and work* righteousness are accepted of him. We rejoice that matters of such importance are not to be determined by any *dubious* and transitory impressions upon our own mind.”*† Mr. Hare showed that Mr. Wesley and Mr. Cooke were at issue on all the points embraced in their respective definitions.

* Sermon, p.p. 20, 21.

+ “If I had a mind,” said the Rev. G. Whitfield, “to hinder the progress of the Gospel, and to establish the kingdom of darkness, I would go about telling people *they might have the Spirit of God*, and yet not *feel* it;” “or, which is much the same,” adds Fletcher, “that the pardon which Christ procured *for* them, is already obtained *by* them, whether they enjoy a sense of it or not. What he *procured* for us, is not obtained *by us*, till the *Holy Ghost* makes the *application*.”—Fletcher’s Third Check, p. 60

“It will not be denied,” says he, “that what Mr. Wesley calls ‘the fruit of the Spirit,’ according to Galatians v. 22,—you call being ‘led by the Spirit,’ according to Romans viii. 14. The expressions are different, but the thing is the same, compare Galatians v. 16—23. After this observation, it will appear to an attentive reader, that, 1. That ‘inward impression on the soul,’ which Mr. Wesley calls the witness of the Spirit,—*you* call ‘the mere creature of imagination.’ 2. *He* says, ‘until God’s Spirit cry in our hearts, Abba, Father! we can never be assured that we are his children.’ *You* say, that those who have the fruit of the Spirit, may ‘have believed the written testimony of the Spirit,’ and, consequently, have an evidence of their acceptance; yea, and need no *clearer* evidence, but of the same kind, namely, that which arises from the fruit of the Spirit, and the knowledge of the written testimony. 3. *He* says, ‘without this inward impression on the soul,’ we *cannot* retain a *steady* peace, nor *avoid perplexing doubts and fears.*’ *You* recommend, to the *exclusion* of that inward impression, only ‘abounding in that conduct, &c., and a more thorough knowledge of the Spirit’s witness, the written testimony concerning them, as the *man of greater confidence.*’ 4. He enjoins that, none *rest* in any supposed fruit of the Spirit, without the

direct witness; and says, 'if we are *wise*, we shall be continually crying to God, until his Spirit cry in our heart, Abba, Father,'—*you* finally *caution* us not to pursue this mere creature of our imagination.*

5. *He* says, 'it is at the *peril* of our soul, if we do rest without this Spirit of adoption.' *You* insinuate that there is danger, lest the pursuit of it should 'lead us we *know not* where.' *He* says, 'the Spirit of God does give a believer *such* a testimony of his adoption, that while it is present to the soul, he can *no more* DOUBT *the reality* of his sonship, than he can DOUBT the shining of the sun, while he stands in the full blaze of his beams.' *You* say, 'let us rejoice, my brethren, that matters of such importance, as the knowledge of our present acceptance with him,' are not to be determined by any DUBIOUS and transitory *impressions* upon our mind."

Mr. Hare then proves, that Mr. Cooke's sentiments, on this doctrine, were as much opposed to Scripture, as they were to the writings of Mr. Wesley.

1. "Sir," says Mr. Hare, "I am of opinion, that you have stumbled over the word *witness*. You seem not to be aware that the term is somewhat metaphorical. Does any man suppose that the Spirit, *pro forma*, in so many distinct words, declares to this or that man, that he is a child of God? Is it not sufficient that God, *immediately* by his Spirit,

gives to us an *inward assurance* that we are his children? And of what importance is it, or what difference will it make, whether the Spirit, when spoken of as imparting such assurance, be called a *witness*, or by some other name which is *equally significant*? 2. The premises, from which you would have a believer conclude himself a child of God, are these: First, 'as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' Secondly, my spirit, reason, or conscience, bears witness that I am led by the Spirit of God; i. e., not only that the Spirit directs and guides me, but that I *follow* his directions, and am *subject* to his government. From these two, you teach him to infer, thirdly, therefore, I am a son and an heir of God. From hence, it will evidently appear, according to your doctrine, that if a man be in doubt whether he be led by the Spirit of God, the witness of the Spirit does not remove that doubt; but so long as that doubt remains, he can with certainty infer nothing concerning his sonship. Again, it will appear on this ground, that if a man reason falsely on his being led by the Spirit, he will reason falsely on his being a child of God.* Now we maintain, that

* I presume you will not affirm, in opposition to the argument now stated, that *no man can be in doubt, whether he be led by the Spirit*; or, that *no man can reason falsely on that*

whereas the evidence arising from the witness of the Spirit, according to you, *depends on the truth and exactness of our own reasonings*, with us it is not so ; for, however ignorant we be, however inconclusive we reason, however erroneous be the testimony of our conscience, the witness of the Spirit is *independent* of every thing of the kind, and, therefore, *leaves no uncertainty.* ‘Let God be true, and every man a liar.’ From hence, we conclude, 3. That independent of his word preached or written, and equally independent of other effects produced by his influence, *God does*, under the dispensation of the Gospel, by the immediate presence and operation of his Spirit upon the hearts of his children, give to them an assurance of their adoption. To illustrate and confirm this truth a little farther, Paul prays for the Ephesians, ‘That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, might give unto them the *spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.*’ Now, when God *partially* reveals himself to us by his Spirit, he thereby gives to us the *spirit of bondage* unto fear. While, in his own light, we behold him as a holy Lawgiver and a righteous Judge ; we say with Job, ‘I have heard

question. Your own words on that subject are, “there may still be persons as *sincere* in their Maker’s service as Gideon and Thomas were, and who may be as *doubtful* as they.”

of thee by the hearing of the ear,' in thy holy word; '*but now mine eye seeth thee,*' by thy Spirit, 'wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' But when he *fully* reveals himself, shows us his glory, makes *all* his goodness to pass before us, and proclaims himself 'The LORD, the *Lord God*, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin:'

'Tis then the *pardoning* God we know,
And *feel* the *blood* applied.'

When he manifests himself to our souls, in all the *mercy*, and *grace*, and *love* of a *reconciled* Father, we receive the Spirit of adoption, crying, Abba, Father. For what is such a revelation of himself by his *Spirit*, but an *immediate divine assurance*, that we are his children. The thing is still the same, when God is said to *dwell in the heart of a believer*. The life, the soul, the all of religion is an *indwelling God*. *These* are the sentiments of Mr. Wesley on this subject.

"Where the indubitable seal
That *ascertains* the kingdom mine?
The powerful *stamp* I long to *feel*,
The *signature* of love divine!

O shed it in my heart abroad,
Fulness of *love*, of heaven, of God."

And again :

"My peace, my life, my comfort, Thou,
My treasure, and my all thou art ;
True *Witness* of my sonship, now
Engraving pardon on my heart,
Seal of my sins, in Christ forgiven,
Earnest of love, and *pledge* of heaven."

The argument of Mr. Hare, goes to prove,
1. That the views of Mr. Cooke, relative to the
Witness of the Spirit, were unscriptural and anti-
Wesleyan. 2. That there is a *direct*, as well as an
indirect Witness of the Spirit.

While Mr. Cooke was associated with Mr. Lowe,
in the Chester circuit, he acted with considerable
reserve ; but, subsequently, he publicly avowed and
defended his principles, which led to his expulsion
from the Wesleyan Connexion.

CHAPTER IX.

Mr. Lowe is appointed to Wrexham—The erection of a new chapel and enlargement of the work of God in that circuit—He removes to Shrewsbury—His labours interrupted by affliction—Becomes a supernumerary at Congleton—His Christian deportment—The duty of the Church to provide for the aged pastor—A touching scene in Mr. Lowe's family—The board and education of three orphan children involve him in pecuniary difficulties—Remarkable interposition of Providence in his behalf—Anecdotes of Howell Harris, Esq., and Dr. Clarke—The effect of early rising in forming character—Mr. Lowe's last illness—Death and funeral—Wesley and Whitfield viewed in their public character—The hostility of the world to primitive Christianity, and modern Methodism, contrasted.

THE two following years, 1803 and 1804, Mr. Lowe spent in the Wrexham circuit. He found the societies in peace, and their religious state satisfactory. His first efforts were directed with a view to fan the flame of zeal and benevolence, and, by a variety of considerations, to stir them up to new and important enterprises in the cause of God. Their chapel in Wrexham soon became inconveniently

small, and, from the indications of stability and prosperity which the society presented, it was deemed a suitable time for "enlarging their borders" by the erection of a larger building. Many difficulties stood in the way; but, as there was considerable life and unanimity and energy in the society, they gradually melted away, and, by giving freely themselves and begging earnestly from others, they succeeded in raising a neat, substantial, and commodious place of worship. Some of the friends, who had not the faith that "removes mountains," nor the charity that "hopeth all things," predicted, that, as the trustees had, in their judgment, built upon too large a scale, the place would exhibit, for years, an empty and desolate appearance. But no sooner were the premises completed, and opened for public worship, than they were filled with attentive hearers. Many individuals, in the immediate vicinity, who had not been accustomed to attend any place of worship, were induced to visit the new chapel on the Lord's day, and became permanent seat-holders. And, what was better, several were awakened and led to dedicate themselves to the service of God. Many of the old members died off during these two years, and, in almost every instance, they declared, in their last moments, that they had peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

What seasons of chastened but hallowed joy are sometimes experienced at the bedside of the dying believer! Here the emptiness and insufficiency of the world to support faith and hope are satisfactorily demonstrated! Here "grace and truth" combine to reveal the imbecility of death, and the omnipotence of perfect love! Here the light of eternity, falling immediately upon the polished substance of the soul, discloses to the bystanders its latent hues and graces. Here the minister of religion sees the forces of the last enemy broken and scattered, and the Christian warrior emerging from the final conflict, "more than conqueror!"

Mr. Lowe, having completed the term of his appointment in Wrexham, left it with regret, and entered upon the superintendence of the Shrewsbury circuit, to which he had been appointed by the Conference of 1805. The duties of the circuit were onerous, and sufficient to occupy the whole of his time. At no previous period of his life had his ministry been more acceptable or effective. But, while he contemplated the widening field of usefulness that lay before him, and longed to see it under an improved system of cultivation, he was admonished by symptoms of constitutional decay, which could not be concealed, that his "pastoral crook" must shortly be transferred to other hands. "The

spirit was indeed willing, but the flesh was weak." His health became subject to sudden and frequent interruptions, yet the people would on no account consent to his leaving them at the end of the year; for, although he was not always able to take his place in the pulpit, they enjoyed the full benefit of his matured judgment and experience in the management and direction of their affairs. For three successive years, this people evinced the warmest affection towards him; relieving him from the more harassing duties of his office, and contributing, in every conceivable way, to his domestic comfort and personal happiness. Mr. Lowe reciprocated this affection, and worked up the fragments of his itinerant life in promoting their best interests.

At the close of the third year, it was obvious to himself and his brethren, that "his days" of ministerial efficiency "were numbered." The kindness and importunity of the people constrained him to take up his residence amongst them as a supernumerary. He still cherished the hope that the rest and happiness he enjoyed here, might, by the divine blessing, enable him to recover his strength, and resume the full duties of the ministry. This hope proved abortive; and, at the end of the year he was led, by several circumstances, to select Congleton as the place of his future residence. The Wesleyans of that

town received him with great cordiality, and, during the remainder of his life, treated him with much deference and respect. Being relieved from the incessant toil of the itinerancy, he resolved to get his "lamp trimmed, and his vessel full of oil," and then to wait for the coming of the Bridegroom. The general state of his health obliged him to restrict his labours to the more private walks of Christian usefulness; but he carried the spirit of his office into this new and limited sphere of labour, and, by the sedulous improvement of his time and talents, brought many sinners to God, and stirred up religious professors to "leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, and go on to perfection." He felt that his responsibility to God and his Church, was just in proportion to his abilities and opportunities; and that, though incapacitated for holding the first, he was yet expected and required to occupy a secondary and subordinate office amongst God's people. Under this conviction, he became a class-leader, and was instrumental, through successive years, in bringing "many sons to glory." Although, when he first settled in Congleton, there was little probability of his being spared to render much service to the Church militant, yet it pleased God to continue him in nearly the same state of health for twenty-nine years. He cheerfully placed himself

under the direction of the superintendent of the circuit, encouraged and supported him in the discharge of his various duties, vindicated the due administration of discipline, and always endeavoured to preserve a good understanding between the preachers and the people. Though the superintendents were generally junior ministers, and sometimes not much disposed to defer to his judgment and experience, he continued to show much respect to their office, and set such an example of order and submission in all things, as exerted a beneficial influence over the local preachers and other circuit officers. His consistency of character, his edifying and spiritual conversation, his equitable and cheerful disposition, rendered him a great favourite with the people; whilst his integrity of principle, his frankness and candour, his unwavering attachment to the constitutional principles of Methodism, secured the entire confidence of the preachers.

When he entered the Wesleyan ministry, he broke up his little establishment at Haddlington, and abandoned a business which was sufficient to supply all his wants, and enable him to provide something for himself and family in future life. After devoting the vigour of manhood to the service of Methodism, it supplied him with no legal claim for pecuniary support in his old age. It commended him to the

care of Providence and the sympathy of the Church, but left him wholly dependent, for his "daily bread," upon the contingencies of Christian benevolence. It is true, that he had created a right, by his own annual subscriptions, to a small annuity from the legalized fund; but Methodism, connexionally, did not acknowledge his claim to a participation in any of *her* funds. In every society, there was a "Poor's Fund," out of which the necessities of the destitute and afflicted members were supplied; but the community provided no adequate means for the relief of aged ministers, widows, and orphans. Many of these lived in solitude, and died in want. This reproach, however, is now wiped away, and provision is being made, under the auspices of the Conference, and with the general concurrence of the people, for the immediate and continued relief of these deserving classes. Mr. Lowe's interest in the "Preachers' Annuitant Society" did not yield him five shillings per week, and this was the whole amount of his income; yet, with this small sum, he was content, and endeavoured, by rigid economy, to "provide things honest in the sight of all men."

Methodism having to create all her own resources and agencies, required time and the maturity of her plans, to enable her to establish, upon satisfactory principles and a permanent foundation, the "New

Auxiliary Fund." Every Church should feel itself equally bound, to make a competent provision for its present "pastor and teacher," and the invalid who has worn himself out in its service.

While Mr. Lowe was adapting his expenses to his income, and entertaining sanguine hopes of comparative comfort, a circumstance occurred which entirely changed his condition, and obscured his prospects for life. By a sudden and mysterious visitation of Providence, three grandchildren were deprived of their parents, and were thrown upon him for their education and support. This was, indeed, a severe trial of his faith and patience; but, "casting all his care upon God," he took the little orphans in, and became "a father to the fatherless!" How wonderful are the ways of God! These very children were destined to be the companions of his declining years, to administer to his comfort in extreme age, and to close his eyes in death. He sent the two boys to school, and, as soon as they were eligible, bound them to a respectable silk-master, to be brought up in the silk trade. He engaged to pay a premium of thirty pounds with each, and, in consequence of these pecuniary liabilities, was frequently almost overwhelmed with perplexity, and brought into extreme difficulties. The time stipulated in the indenture, for the payment of

the first thirty pounds, approached ; and, as he had feared, his expenses for affliction, the outfit of the boys, and the education of the little girl, had absorbed nearly all his savings, and left him with but a very small sum to meet this heavy demand. He could not borrow the amount required, as he had no security to offer. He loved the children as if they had been his own, and while they were playing about him at meal times, unconscious of the anguish he was enduring on their account, he tried to conceal his distress, and forced himself to take a part in their innocent recreations. He would often take one of them upon his knee, and endeavour to relieve his feelings by singing—

“Come, let us ascend, my companion and friend,
To a taste of the banquet above ;
If thy heart be as mine, if for Jesus it pine,
Come up into the chariot of love.

Who in Jesus confide, we are bold to outride
The storms of affliction beneath ;
With the prophet we soar, to the heavenly shore,
And outfly all the arrows of death.

Who on earth can conceive, how happy we live,
In the palace of God, the great King ?
What a concert of praise, when our Jesus' grace,
The whole heavenly company sing !”

“This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.” A few mornings before the money was actually due, the postman brought him a letter, for which he charged one-and-eightpence. “That is a heavy charge,” said Mr. Lowe, “yes,” said the postman, “but it is the usual charge for a double letter from London.” “I think,” said Mr. Lowe, “you had better send it back, for I have no correspondence with any person in London, and one-and-eightpence is a very large sum to pay for a letter.” The postman remarked, that he was sure it had something in it, and advised him to take it. He paid the postman, with some reluctance, and hastened away to examine a document that had cost him so much. On opening the letter, he found enclosed, a Bank of England note for twenty pounds, “from a Christian friend in London, whose name he was not to know till the morning of the resurrection.” He laid this letter and its enclosure before God, and acknowledged, with a grateful heart, his merciful interposition in this “time of need.” Speaking of it afterwards, he said, “I had, somehow or other, an impression that the Lord would find out some means of relieving me in this season of embarrassment. This impression was strengthened by reflecting upon the following anecdote, which was told me by the Rev. William

Percival. 'At one of the Conferences,' said he, 'it was ascertained, on making up the accounts for the year, that our financial affairs were in a bad state, and that our difficulties were alarming. On this announcement being made, Howell Harris, Esq., stood up and said, 'brethren we do not pray enough. We must have faith in God, and trust in him under all difficulties. When I was building the great house for the poor, at Trevecka, I visited the sick and distressed in one line or other, till I had contracted a debt of two hundred pounds. I borrowed the money of a friend ; who, in a little time, wanted it for himself, and was under the necessity of desiring it to be returned. I was in very great distress ; as I could neither pay the money myself, nor procure it from any one else. Being in this situation, I knelt down, and made my request known to the Saviour. I simply told him my trouble and the cause of it. I said, 'O Lord, thou knowest that I have not spent any part of this money upon myself. I have given the whole of it to thy servants, the sick and the poor ; and thou hast said in thy word, that "he that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth to the Lord : and that which he hath given will he pay him again." Now then, O Lord, I have lent thee two hundred pounds, and I now claim thy promise, and expect thee to repay me, as thou knowest that I am

distressed for the want of it.' 'I had no sooner made my case known to God, but a gentleman farmer knocked at my door ; upon his coming into my house, he said,' 'is your name Harris?' 'I replied, yes Sir.' He then said, 'do not you visit and relieve the poor sometimes?' 'I answered, yes I do, when I have any thing to relieve them with.' He said, 'Providence has been very kind to me of late, and prospered me very much ; here are two hundred pounds ; if you will be so kind as to dispose of this sum for me, I shall be obliged to you.' I returned the gentleman my sincere thanks, took the money, paid my debts, and praised God for his condescending mercy and love.''' At a subsequent period, and when again at his "wits end," Mr. Lowe received a letter from an "unknown friend in the Shrewsbury circuit," containing a sum sufficient to enable him to pay every man his own. As he recognized the sovereignty of providence in every event of life,

"He took the blessing from above,
And wondered at His boundless love."

When speaking of the frequent occasions on which Providence seemed to shape a new course, in order to meet some peculiarity in his condition, and

of the unabated flow of sympathy and benevolence on the part of God's people, he said, "I have a duty to discharge to the dead. I wish it to be put upon record, that I am one, of a numerous class, whom the Christian philanthropy of the late Rev. John and Mary Fletcher, of Madeley, placed under great obligations. But, Sir, I never appeared before my friends as a pauper. I never made them uncomfortable by a detail of my privations. I laid the helplessness and destitution of my state before my heavenly Father, and he always raised me up friends, who relieved me in every season of extremity *unsolicited*. Thus by the *unsolicited* liberality of those friends, I have been enabled to pay my way, and to put my orphan charge in a condition to provide for themselves. Sir, you will be pleased to remark, that this liberality, spreading itself over a period of twenty-eight years, has been wholly *unsolicited* on my part." Those who thus ministered to this "righteous man," in temporal things, had the full benefit of a continued interest in his prayers. While he was able, he attended the private and public means of grace, with a punctuality, that was not without its effect upon the society and congregation at large.

Neither the character nor the abilities of the preachers, were made the subject of animadversion

in his intercourse with the people. In the house of God, he was a candid hearer and a devout worshipper. When his lameness increased, so as to confine him to his house, he would question his grandsons, on their return from chapel, as to the nature and effects of the service. "Who," he would enquire, "has been preaching? Have you had a good congregation? What was the text? You must have had a good sermon from such a text as that! Was there much power? The word of God used to be overwhelming, the people fell down under it! Tell me what you recollect of the sermon; when I was able to attend preaching, I heard with all my might."

Next to the Bible, Wesley was his favourite author; and, of all his writings, his sermons and journals were the most frequently consulted. He was a close student of the Bible. He seemed to have imbibed its spirit—to have its laws written upon his heart—and to be constantly breathing after the exalted privileges it reveals. He handled it as if he believed it to be a sacred thing, and read it with great solemnity of manner. This was peculiarly the case with the Rev. Dr. Adam Clarke. Observing, that the Doctor invariably stood up when he read the Scriptures to his family; the writer of this life, took the liberty of inquiring,

one morning, into his reason for such a practice. He replied, "this book," opening the Bible as he spoke, "I consider to be the representative of the infinite God, whose voice addresses me as often as it is read in my hearing. Do the 'eyes of a servant look unto the hand of his master, and the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress,' when they appear in their presence to receive their instructions? and is it not equally reasonable, that I should place myself in an attitude of respectful attention, when I have to be instructed in my duty, by the Supreme Being?"

It has already been remarked, that Mr. Lowe's practice of early rising, furnished him with many valuable opportunities for mental and spiritual improvement. And up to a late period in life, he was seldom in bed, even in winter, after seven o'clock in the morning. As the eye of some youthful candidate for distinction in the church, may pass over these pages, let him pause and remember, that nearly all our great men have ascribed the success and extent of their labours, to their having accustomed themselves to go early to bed, and rise early in the morning, and to this practice many have attributed their excellent health and length of life. "Homer, Horace, Virgil, and numerous other ancient writers were early risers. Sir Thomas Moore,

who assures us it was by stealing time from his sleep and meals, that he was enabled to complete his 'Utopia;' made it his invariable practice to rise at four; and he became so well convinced of the excellence of the habit, that he represents the Utopians as attending public lectures every morning, before day-break. When Bishop Burnett was at college, his father aroused him to his studies every morning, at four o'clock; and he continued the practice of early rising to the end of his life. Bishop Horne states, that during the composition of his very excellent version of the 'Psalms,' he arose 'fresh as the morning to his task.' Sir Matthew Hale always rose early, and studied sixteen hours a-day. Addison, during his stay at Blois, rose as early as between two and three in summer. Dr. Doddridge says, it is to his habit of early rising, that the world is indebted for nearly the whole of his valuable works. Fabricius states, that 'Linnaeus arose very early in summer, mostly about four o'clock; at six he came and breakfasted with us, about one-eighth of a league distant from his residence, and then gave lectures upon the natural orders of plants, which generally lasted until ten.' Dr. Tissot says, that Zimmerman was accustomed to rise very early in the morning, and wrote several hours before he began his professional visits. Dr.

Paley, who in the early part of his college career, frittered away his time in the society of idle and extravagant acquaintances, and was one morning awakened at five o'clock by a friend, who reproached him with the waste of his time, though possessing strong faculties of mind. Struck with the justness of the rebuke, Paley, from that time forward, rose at five o'clock every morning, and continued the practice ever after. It is easy to conceive how this excellent reform contributed to the achievement of the celebrity of the author of the 'Evidences of Christianity,' 'Moral Philosophy,' &c. Bishop Jewell rose regularly at four: and Dr. Parkhurst, the Philologist, at four in summer and six in winter, in the latter season always making his own fire. Franklin and Priestley, among our philosophers, were early risers. It was by the hours gained by early rising, that Sir Walter Scott was enabled to put, with such wonderful rapidity, so many volumes into the hands of the public. He rose at five o'clock, and lit his own fire, when the season required one. By six o'clock he was seated at his desk, which he did not leave till breakfast time, between nine and ten. After breakfast, he devoted two hours more to his solitary task; and by noon he was, as he used to say, 'his own man.' When the weather was bad, he remained at work incessantly

all the morning ; but his general rule was to be out on horseback by one o'clock at the latest : while, if any more distant excursion had been proposed over night, he was ready to start on it by ten : his occasional rainy days of winter, of unremitted study, forming, as he said, a fund in his favour, out of which he was entitled to draw for accommodation whenever the sun shone with special brightness."

From early in the morning till late at night, Mr. Lowe was fully occupied :

"No moment lingered unemployed,
Or unimproved."

Some great religious object always filled his mind, expanding and preserving the activity of his faculties. He was rather like a man who had much business on hand and was pressed for time in which to do it, than like one who had finished as "an hireling his day," and was waiting for the promised reward. Hence, when between eighty and ninety years of age, he was the leader of two classes, and only relinquished the office when called away to the fellowship of heaven. He sometimes felt a momentary fear, lest he should outlive his ability to be useful, and often prayed that, if it pleased God, he might

"His body with his charge lay down,
And cease, at once, to work and live."

This prayer was almost literally answered : for his last illness was of short duration. His sufferings were indeed severe ; but grace triumphed in the last moments of expiring nature and enabled him to say, with David, “ My flesh and my heart fail, but the Lord is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.” He presented, during the brief period of his sickness, an edifying example of sanctified submission to the entire will of God. A day or two before his death, he seized the hand of his grandson and exclaimed, “ Glory be to God ! ” Immediately after this, he became unconscious, and remained so until the spirit, “ adorned as a bride for her husband,” entered “ into the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

His funeral was attended by a large concourse of people, who deeply deplored the loss which Christian society had sustained by his death. A funeral service was held on the following Sunday ; on which occasion a paper was read, from which the following is an extract ;—giving a brief, but comprehensive, view of his character, and drawn up by the author of “ Decision and Indecision : ”—

“ He continued, thus beloved, prosecuting his work, as pastor over God’s heritage, with but slight intermissions, until the year 1808, when he was

compelled, for want of health, to retire as a supernumerary. Congleton was eventually fixed upon as the place of his future residence: and 'ye are witnesses how holily and justly, and unblameably he behaved himself among you.' For nearly thirty years he has been, in this town, 'a *burning* and a *shining* light:' and many, yea, I may say, *all of you*, have rejoiced in his light. You have seen the grace of God manifested in the zeal which urged him, even to the extreme verge of a long life, to engage in every sphere of usefulness within his reach, to further the spiritual interests of those around him. The grace of God was also magnified in his last sufferings: causing him, when oppressed with sickness and the infirmities of age, to reflect the beatitudes of the Christian spirit. It cannot be expected, from my being a comparative stranger, that I can pourtray all the good which adorned his character; but I can bear testimony to many traits of excellence which, during the last year, I have observed with pleasure and delight. Amongst these may be mentioned his attachment to the doctrines and discipline of Wesleyan Methodism. Arrived at that age, when, to ordinary men, 'the grasshopper becomes a burden, and desire fails,' he evinced the ardour of youth, and the energy of a man of strength, when any thing affecting the interests of

Methodism was brought under his notice. He was no croaker.* In describing the scenes he had witnessed, in connexion with early Methodism, he would add, 'Aye, and that is more than seventy years ago : ' but he would never disparage the work of the present day : on the contrary, he would speak in glowing terms, of the improved intelligence, unity, and efficiency of modern Methodism. None contributed more cheerfully than he did to the Centenary Fund ; and to show that his attachment to the cause of truth and righteousness was unabated, he allowed himself to be assisted to the platform on that occasion, where his presence and address added much to the interest of the meeting. He did indeed rejoice to see that day : 'he saw it and was glad ! ' His liberality was great. I have been surprised, knowing as I did the straitness of his circumstances, at the cheerfulness with which he would tender his sovereign towards supporting our benevolent institutions in this place : and it is well known that the poor and needy, who sought his aid, were never turned away empty. As a leader, he has gone before his people in all spiritual understanding and in the attainment of all spiritual blessings. In him they

* A term used by Mr. Wesley to denote persons who are continually lamenting that "former days were better than these."

have lost a friend, a counsellor, a guide : and it is not to be expected that they will be privileged to 'see his like again.' His 'hoary head was a crown of glory, being found in the way of righteousness :'' and honoured was that dwelling whence ascended, morning, noon, and night, in loudest strains, his song of praise from a peaceful and a grateful heart.'

"A few days before the Conference," says the Rev. Wm. Parker, "I called to see him ; and found him, as usual, happy in God. While engaged in prayer, he was visited with such an overwhelming manifestation of the love of God, that he broke out in rapturous ecstasy, and seemed completely 'lost in wonder, love, and praise.' He frequently afterwards referred to this hallowing season, and urged me to call as often as possible. But the 'hour of his departure was at hand.'"

"Yet when he came nearer to finish his race,
Like a fine setting sun he shone richest in grace,
And gave a sure hope at the end of his day,
Of rising in brighter array."

He died on Monday, August the 19th, within a few months of completing the 90th year of his age.
"Let my last end be like his !"

In reviewing that section of ecclesiastical history with which Mr. Lowe stood identified, it must be allowed, we think, that Whitfield was the John Baptist of the age, and especially in relation to that great religious movement which gave a fresh impulse to the faith of Christendom. "In a rapture of self-devotion, he traversed England, Scotland, and Ireland, for four-and-thirty years, and crossed the Atlantic thirteen times, proclaiming the love of God and his great gift to man. A bright and exulting view of the atonement's efficacy was his theology: delight in God and rejoicing in Christ Jesus were his piety: and a compassionate solicitude for the souls of men, often rising to a fearful agony, was his ruling passion: and strong in the oneness of his aim and the intensity of his feelings, he soon burst the regular bounds, and began to preach on commons and village-greens, and even to the rabble at London fairs. He was the prince of English preachers. Many have surpassed him as sermon-makers; but none have approached him as a pulpit-orator. Many have outshone him in the clearness of their logic, the grandeur of their conceptions, and the sparkling beauty of single sentences: but in the power of darting the gospel direct into the conscience, he eclipsed them all. None ever used so boldly, nor with more success, the highest styles of

impersonation. His "Hark ! Hark !!" could conjure up Gethsemane with its faltering moon, and awake again the cry of horror-stricken innocence : and an apostrophe to Peter on the holy mount would light up another Tabor, and drown it in glory from the opening heaven. But the glory of Whitfield's preaching was in its heart-kindled and heart-melting gospel. He was an orator ; but he only sought to be an evangelist. Like a volcano where gold and gems may be darted forth as well as common things, but where gold and molten granite flow all alike in fiery fusion, bright thoughts and splendid images might be projected from his flaming pulpit : but all were merged in the stream which bore along the gospel and himself in blended fervour. Indeed, so simple was his nature, that glory to God and good will to man having filled it, there was room for little more. Having no church to found, no family to enrich, and no memory to immortalize, he was the mere ambassador of God : and inspired with its genial, piteous spirit—so full of heaven reconciled and humanity restored—he soon himself became a living gospel. Radiant with its benignity, and trembling with its tenderness, by a sort of spiritual induction, a vast audience would speedily be brought into a frame of mind,—the transformation of his own : and the white furrows on their sooty faces

told that the Kingswood colliers were weeping, or the quivering of an ostrich plume bespoke its elegant wearer's deep emotion. And coming to his work direct from communion with his Maker, and in all the strength of accepted prayer, there was an elevation in his mien which often paralyzed hostility, and a self-possession which only made him, amid uproar and fury, the more sublime. With an electric bolt he would bring the jester in his fool's cap from his perch on the tree, or galvanize the brick-bat from the skulking miscreant's grasp, or sweep down in crouching submission and shame-faced silence, the whole of Bartholomew fair : whilst a revealing flash of sententious doctrine, or vivified scripture, would disclose to awe-struck thousands the forgotten verities of another world, or the unsuspected arcana of their inner man. "I came to break your head ; but, through you, God has broken my heart ;" was a sort of confession with which he was familiar : and to see the deaf old gentleman, who used to mutter imprecations at him as he passed along the street, clambering up the pulpit-stairs to catch his angelic words, was a sort of spectacle which the triumphant gospel often witnessed in his day.

Had the views of George Whitfield and John Wesley been identical, and their labours all along coincident, their long services to the gospel might

have repeated Paul and Barnabas. Whitfield was soul, and Wesley was system. After a preaching paroxysm, Whitfield lay panting on his couch, spent, breathless, and death-like: after his morning sermon in the Foundry, Wesley would mount his pony, and trot, and chat, and gather simples, till he reached some country hamlet, where he would bait his charger, talk through a little sermon with the villagers, and re-mount his pony and trot away again. A master of assemblies, Whitfield was no match for the isolated man; seldom coping with the multitude, but strong in astute sagacity, and personal ascendancy, Wesley could conquer any number one by one. All force and impetus, Whitfield was the powder-blast in the quarry, and by one explosive sermon would shake a district, and detach materials for other men's long work: deft, neat, and painstaking, Wesley loved to split and trim each fragment into uniform plinths and polished stones. Or, taken otherwise, Whitfield was the bargeman or the waggoner who brought the timber of the house, and Wesley was the architect who set it up. Whitfield had no patience for ecclesiastical polity; no aptitude for pastoral details: with a beaver-like propensity for building, Wesley was always constructing societies; and with a king-like craft of ruling, was most at home presiding over a class-meeting.

or a Conference. To a degree scarcely paralleled, his piety had supplanted those strong instincts,—the love of worldly distinction, the love of money, and the love of ease.”

“When we see Wesley and Whitfield dividing their whole lives between the pulpit, the closet, and the class-room ; sacrificing all domestic enjoyment, and personal ease ; encountering savage mobs, and addressing congregated thousands ; pacing backward and forward the whole length of the kingdom, and crossing the ocean many times ; moving the population of cities, and filling nations with the fame and the fruit of their evangelical labours ; breathing little else than the atmosphere of crowded chapels and preaching-houses, except when they lifted up their voice under the canopy of heaven ; regaling themselves, not with the dainties of the table, nor the repose of the soft luxurious couch, but with the tears of the penitent, and the songs of the rejoicing believer ; making it their one and only business to seek the salvation of souls, and their one only happiness to rejoice in the number of their conversions ; indifferent alike to the savage fury of their persecutors, and the fondest flatteries of their followers ; sometimes rising from the bed of sickness to address the multitudes, in circumstances which rendered it probable that they would exchange the pulpit for

the tomb ; to sum up all in one short sentence—wearing out life in labour so great, that it looked as if they were in haste to die ; when we see this, how can we endure to think of the way in which we are living, or scarcely imagine that we are living at all ? How can we witness their earnestness and not feel as if we knew nothing of the passion for saving souls ? ”

To Whitfield must be conceded the honour of having raised a “cry in the” moral “wilderness,” which moved the dead, and spread a deep and general concern about religion throughout these lands. He was indeed, “a man sent from God ;” and it devolves upon the future historian of the period in which he lived, laboured, triumphed, and died, to do justice to his memory. His “cry,” not being embodied in any documentary form, nor in any well defined system of church polity, has, as might have been expected, died away upon the public ear. If he were not the principal, he was, at least, the most distinguished and successful auxiliary, in collecting the materials with which the foundations of the Wesleyan temple were laid. Those foundations have been strengthened and carried out, and the building itself wonderfully enlarged, since the death of the original founders. This edifice is destined to endure while the fidelity of its priesthood

secures to its altars the continued residence and the reflected glory of the shekinah !

The national mind was as much divided in judgment and feeling, respecting the origin and tendency of Methodism, as were the members of the Jewish Sanhedrim, respecting the character and progress of Christianity. "If this counsel or work be of man," said Gamaliel, "it will come to nought ; but, if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." There were certain circumstances, connected with the proceedings of the apostles, which seemed to indicate that their "counsel and work were of men, and would come to nought." The character of the agents employed seemed to justify such a conclusion. Gamaliel was a man of experience and observation, and had witnessed many popular commotions in his day. His personal knowledge furnished several examples illustrative of his own axiom. "You will recollect," said he, "That before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody : to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves : who was slain : and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.' Nor is this," he observed, "a solitary instance : 'After this man rose up Judas of Galilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him : he also perished : and all, even as many

as obeyed him, were dispersed.' ” The leaders of these factions were engaged in a guilty enterprise, and being without prudence, wealth, or political influence, their “counsel and work came to nought.” The apostles of Christ stood before the Sanhedrim and their country, without fortune, character, or learning ; hence Gamaliel classed them at once with Theudas and Judas of Galilee ; and concluded that, in all probability, the men and their cause would share a similar fate. “Take my advice,” said he, “ ‘Refrain from these men, and let them alone ;’ they will soon commit themselves.” Such was the national sentiment, and such were the predictions of the “wise and prudent,” in reference to Wesley and his coadjutors. Dr. Smollet says, “The progress of reason, and free cultivation of the human mind, had not entirely banished those ridiculous sects and schisms of which the kingdom had been formerly so productive. Imposture and fanaticism still hung upon the skirts of religion. Weak minds were seduced by the delusion of a superstition styled Methodism, raised upon the affectation of superior sanctity, and maintained by pretensions to divine illumination. Many thousands, in the lower ranks of life, were infected with this species of enthusiasm, by the unwearied endeavours of a few *obscure* preachers, such as Whitfield and the two Wesleys,

who propagated their doctrine to the most remote corners of the British dominions, and found means to lay the *whole* kingdom under contribution.”*

The circumstances of those to whom the apostles addressed themselves, no doubt, led to the general belief, that their “counsel and work were not of God, but of men.” To the Jews, it seemed absurd to suppose that God would subvert the national faith, and supersede the institutions of Moses. The one was established by divine interposition : the other by divine appointment. The apostles attacked both. The Jews believed in the inspiration of their own scriptures, and maintained that they contained a complete revelation of the will of God. The apostles denied this conclusion ; and insisted upon grafting the doctrines and institutions of Christ upon those of Moses. The Jews held the ceremonial law to be of perpetual obligation : the apostles told them it must be abrogated, and denounced it as a “yoke” to which the people were no longer to submit. The Jews were of opinion that the “blood of their sacrifices” constituted a sufficient atonement for sin : the apostles denied its efficacy ; and dwelt, in the most fervent and glowing language, upon the infinite superiority of the blood that was shed upon

* Hume and Smollet, Vol. xvi. p. 279.

the cross : "If," said they, "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh : How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God ?" What could be expected but that a "counsel and work," conducted by such agents, so repugnant to the national feeling, so hostile to the established faith, and so opposed to their civil and ecclesiastical polity, should "come to nought ?" The "stedfast faith of the apostles" was regarded as obstinacy ; their burning zeal as enthusiasm ; and their unparalleled success as a public calamity. Wesley and his "artisan preachers," as they were called, were equally the objects of popular jealousy and national resentment. Methodism, like Christianity, advanced "like a root out of a dry ground : it had no form nor comeliness : and when the people saw it, there was no beauty that they should desire it." Its agents were supposed to be disaffected to the government, and adverse to the peace of society. It was insinuated that Wesley was confederated with the Scotch pretender, for the purpose of changing the British dynasty ; and his brother Charles was tried in Dublin, "as a rogue and vagabond," for disturbing the peace of His

Majesty's subjects. They appeared to be dissatisfied with every thing in church and state. They found fault with the administration of the Bishops, and questioned the soundness and morality of many of the clergy. They declared Catholics, Socinians, and calvinists, to be in error ; and taught Justification by Faith alone, the Witness of the Spirit, and Christian Perfection. They interfered with what were regarded as the *innocent recreations* of the people on the Lord's day ; and inculcated the rigid principles embodied in the fourth commandment. They set up a Church form in which all distinctions of office seemed to be abolished ; and clergymen, and mechanics, and even women, were authorised as teachers, either in their public assemblies or in their class-meetings. It was confidently expected that a system so irregular and defective in its principles and agencies would "come to nought" on the death of its founder.

But it is evident there were other circumstances which led Gamaliel to doubt whether, after all, the Apostolic "counsel and work," might not be of God ! He was compelled to admit that the "tent-makers and fishermen," had "filled Jerusalem with their doctrine," and converted many of the priests. The order of their ministry, which was not that of Aaron, nor that of Levi, nor yet that of Melchizedec

they declared to be of God, and established its claim to this distinction by "signs from heaven." They admitted that they had not received their qualifications from the schools of the prophets, but from the inspiration of God. It was conceded that some of them were highly gifted by nature: that others were adorned with various literature: while with one voice they declared that they were all converted to God, and commissioned by the same authority. They did not profess to regulate their labours by the canonical laws of the High Priest, but by the precepts of the gospel. And what were the first race of Wesleyan preachers, but a new order of evangelists, sent forth by the Head of the Church, to accomplish a work which neither the parochial clergy, nor the dissenting communities, had the disposition nor the ability to perform.

The doctrines they propagated were of God. They proved the universality of sin, and the infinite sufficiency of the Christian atonement: they inculcated repentance towards God upon all classes of persons;—a repentance producing practical evidence of its depth and genuineness: they dwelt upon justification by faith alone, to the exclusion of the works of the law: they maintained that all who are justified have the witness in themselves: they enforced Christian perfection. Such, then, were the

prominent and uniform topics of the Wesleyan Ministry.

The discipline they instituted was of God. The candidates for admission into the Church were required to believe the doctrines of Christianity, and evince a desire to flee from the wrath to come : they were expected and required to observe the private, social, and public means of grace : they were to observe the commandments of God, and imitate the example of Christ : to be sober, industrious, charitable, zealous, patient in suffering, and submissive to spiritual authority : they forfeited the right of membership by outwardly violating the precepts of the gospel, or neglecting the positive duties of religion. The reader will observe a close resemblance between this brief outline and the Apostolic platform.

Their success proved their "counsel and work" to be of God. If the Apostles could point to men of all nations and languages and say, "Ye are our epistles, known and read of all men," was not the progress of the Wesleys and their Itinerants equally marked by the hallelujahs of converted multitudes ? Even the colliers of Kingswood and Newcastle, who had been addicted to the most debasing vices and barbarous habits, they formed into churches of industrious, exemplary, and devout Christians.

Being in strict conformity to the plans of God's benevolence, "this counsel and work" could not "come to nought." Many attempts have been made to "overthrow" the Wesleyan church, but they have signally failed. It had much to contend with, arising out of the political circumstances of the country; the unfaithfulness of the magistrates; and the persecuting spirit of many of the clergy; but the most formidable obstruction to its progress arose from other causes: "Of your own selves," says the Apostle, "shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them."

The peace of the whole Connexion was interrupted by certain trustees, who claimed the *right* of appointing the preachers to their respective chapels. Had this been admitted, they would have denied the authority of Conference to remove them without their consent, and the societies would soon, in all probability, have become independent churches. At a subsequent period, the whole community was convulsed by an attempt to introduce lay representatives into the Conference. As Methodism was constituted, there was a nice balance of ministerial and popular influence, which would have been destroyed by the infusion of a larger measure of democratic power. Since then, the validity of the grand charter of Methodism has been tested in the Court of

Chancery ; but it has passed through the ordeal, not only unimpaired in its efficiency, but expounded, amplified, and confirmed in all its principles and details, by the highest legal authority in the state. These considerations have led some of the most zealous antagonists of the Wesleyan economy to admit, that a religious system, that has not been “overthrown” by the political revolutions to which it has been exposed—by the ecclesiastical and judicial authorities who have denied it the humblest *status* amongst the churches of this country—nor by the violent polemical warfare to which its fundamental principles have been exposed ;—but, on the contrary, has advanced in moral grandeur, giving Christian Counsellors to the national senate—Christian Judges to the bench—and Christian Ministers to the pulpits of all denominations ;—yet maintaining its own unity, and converting, in its progress, multitudes to God—“cannot be of men, and must be of God.”

THE END.

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